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ABSTRACT

These six theme-oriented newsletter issues present specific curriculum planning ideas and activities for teachers of young children. The theme of the January/February 1995 issue is "Circle Time." This issue offers many activities for circle time in the areas of math, science, language development, music, movement, and social studies. The theme of the March/April 1995 issue is "Look Up!" This issue focuses on what children can learn by observing the sky, stars, moon, birds, airplanes, insects, and rainbows. "On the Move!" is the theme of the May/June 1995 issue; it focuses on successful field trip planning and implementation both away from school and in a child's imagination. The theme of the July/August 1995 issue is also "On the Move!" This issue focuses on outdoor classroom activities in backyards, beaches, gardens, and the natural world. The theme of the September/October 1995 issue is "Beginnings." This issue focuses on the child's first experience with a structured school program and what can be done in preparation for a smooth transition. The theme of the November/December 1995 issue is "Let's Celebrate." This issue focuses on techniques for celebrating traditional holidays and creating new traditions for celebration. All issues provide a section listing vendors and advertisers who are retailers of educational materials for youngsters. (SD)

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Vol. 16 No. 1 *For People Who Care for Young Children* January/February 1995

THEME: Circle Time

WHAT'S INSIDE:

- How to have a perfect circle time
- Keeping your circle active
- Surveys, science, and sensory experiences in your circle
- Problem-solving with puppets
- New ideas for Show 'n Tell
- Circle time in pantomime
- Inviting visitors to your circle
- Should toddlers have circle time?
- And Lots More!

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CONTENTS

FEATURES:

Circle Time Basics........ 6
Who's in Charge?........ 8
Keep It Active........ 9
Tune In to "Show and Tell"........ 12
Circle Time Choices........ 14
Ideas Off the Book Shelf........ 16
"Moving" a Circle........ 18
Singing in the Circle........ 19
A Puppet a Day........ 26
Problem Solving with Puppetry........ 27
Circles at Circle Time........ 28
Survey Your Circle........ 29
Circle Time Without Words........ 30
Science Circles........ 31
Sensory Circles........ 32
Visitors in the Circle........ 34

DEPARTMENTS:

HELPFUL HINTS: Planning a Great Circle Time........ 5
TODDLER TIME: Wiggly Toddlers in a Circle........ 10
SINGING IN YOUR CIRCLE........ 19

IN THE BOOK CORNER:

Feelings in the Circle........ 23
Read Me A Song........ 24

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

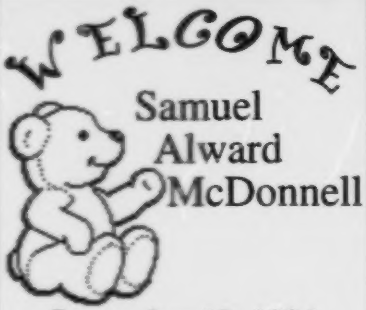
by Lisa Lyons Durkin

HAPPY NEW YEAR! All of us who work at First Teacher are looking forward to helping you make 1995 your most rewarding year as a teacher of young children. Did you know that almost everyone—including some of our artists—who works with us also works directly with children? In fact, most of our contributors started out as subscribers, just like you. Maybe 1995 is the year you will join them and share the ideas and activities that have worked well for you in the pages of *First Teacher*. Take a look at the upcoming themes for this year (and instructions for submitting ideas) on page 38 and see if any ideas come to mind.

There are lots of terrific ideas for you to use right away in this issue of *First Teacher*. To quote Karen Stephens, *"a successful circle time requires planning, preparation, and practice."* All of our authors have done plenty of the "three p's," so you can reap the benefits of their experience. Karen and Gail Jones look at the basics: the where, when , what, why, and how of this everyday routine—giving you lots of specific ways to improve the overall character of your circles. Mary Beth Spann Minucci looks at how to keep your circles from becoming too teacher-directed. One way is to give children lots of choices; Barbara Backer shows you how. Another way is to introduce a puppet to stimulate creative thinking and problem-solving—more about this on pages 26 and 27.

Throughout the issue there are hundreds of suggestions for developmentally appropriate activities to introduce at circle time. There's **math:** surveys that lead to pictographs and shape recognition (starting with a circle of course). There's **science:** sensory activities and explorations that take off with some "leading" questions. There's **language development:** some new twists on Show 'n Tell and even a circle time without words. There's **music:** helping children think of new words to familiar tunes and using story books of favorite songs so children can connect the written word with words that are sung. There's **movement!** (Children who sit without moving have very short attention spans!) Fingerplays, action songs, role playing—these can enhance your circle time. For **social studies,** don't forget to invite visitors into your circle.

So give "three silent cheers" (an active, but quiet, circle time idea) for 1995 and set the mood for an exciting, fun year full of learning during circle time.



Samuel
Alward
McDonnell

September 10, 1994
8 lbs. 14 oz.

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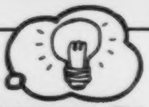


HELPFUL HINTS

PLANNING A GREAT CIRCLE TIME

by Gail P. Jones

Good circle times don't "just happen!" Plan every circle time carefully with regard to the size of the group, seating arrangements, subject matter, supplies needed, time needed, etc. Make sure your circle time is child-centered!

Remember that children behave better when they feel good. If the room is too hot or too cold, drafty or stuffy, it will affect their behavior. Also, make sure the surface they're sitting on isn't cold, damp, or "itchy." Is the lighting sufficient and not too glaring?

Try to anticipate and avoid all distractions whether it is hall noise, a snapping window shade, or a rambunctious co-worker. If they cut the grass at your school every Friday during your circle time, be sure to change your schedule.

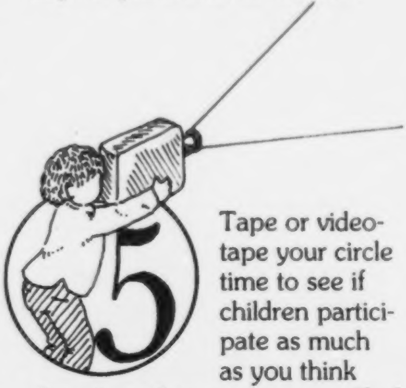
Deciding when to have circle time depends upon who, what, where, and when.

◆ Are all children present so no one feels left out or misses special activities?

◆ What kinds of activities take place during circle time?

◆ Where is the best place to hold a group session in a circle?

◆ Do you need to have it before centers? Should it be at the beginning and end of the day for plans and/or closure?



Tape or videotape your circle time to see if children participate as much as you think they do and to assure yourself of the fact that it is fun and all children can see well. Does the teacher talk too much? Do children seem restless or bored? Are you giving too much attention to misbehavior instead of praising good participation? Self-evaluate several times throughout the year.

Circle time is a great opportunity for developing self-confidence and self-esteem. (It can also destroy them if children are humiliated, scolded, or embarrassed!) Make sure all children get a chance to participate and none are ever forced. Name tags of all children in a bowl can be drawn to assure everyone of getting a turn.

For a change of pace, try adding little "surprises" to your circle time. It might be a tiny, furry puppet in your pocket or a sticker to use for a circle time activity introducing a holiday or season. Why not spray a few whiffs of air freshener before children sit down, of pine for December or floral for spring! See who notices it first!

Always end on a *high note* so children look forward to the next circle time!

CIRCLE TIME BASICS

by Karen Stephens

What goes on in circle time?

1. Children learn to function in a social group.
2. Listening and concentration skills develop.
3. Respect for the rights and ideas of others is nurtured.
4. Children offer their personal views on topics which arise.
5. The group gets to know each other more intimately, leading to classroom unity and attachment.

All of these things can happen during circle times, but rarely by accident. As with any other teaching skill, conducting a successful circle time requires planning, preparation, and practice. Here are some tips to help you on your way to more satisfying circle times.

▶ **Make sure circle times are developmentally appropriate.** Base activities on children's ages, abilities, as well as individual and group interests.

▶ **Plan transition activities** to guide children into the group experience. Smooth transitions help ease children gradually from one activity to another. For instance, if children are finishing snack and are about to go to the circle time area, ask them to walk over like robots or a favorite animal. As soon as children begin arriving at the area, begin an activity, such as a fingerplay or guessing game.

Involve children in selecting transitions! For instance, allow children to take turns choosing the method of movement during a transition time. Have them tap their heads while they move from one place to the next. The following day, ask children to think of another challenge, such as touching an elbow to a knee while moving to the circle area.

▶ **Plan for personal space and comfort.** A taped circle on the floor gives children a concrete way of understanding where to sit during circle time. Seat yourself where everyone can see you and your props or activity materials easily.

▶ **Offer children chances to make decisions.** Be prepared to read one of two books. Show each book to children. Let them vote on which book to have read. Voting can be conducted by a show of hands. Or place each book on one side of the circle area. Children then move their bodies next to the book they would like to hear. Let children count to see which book has more "votes."

▶ **Capture children's attention.** A "focus" object is helpful. For instance, introduce a butterfly book with an actual butterfly, or a large poster of butterflies of the world, or let children lightly touch the wings of butterflies that have died.

▶ **Vary your circle time performance.** Dress up and come in as a "character" some day. Can children see through your disguise? Use a theatrical voice, Martian voice, whisper, or pantomime. Have fun!

▶ **Set a mood to maintain interest.** Are you going to be sorting sea shells? Play environmental music of seashore waves. I love to match background music to books when reading during circle time; for example, Native American flute music can be played quietly while you read *The Legend of Bluebonnet* by Tomi DePaola (Putnam).

▶ **Use the element of chance** to include children. Write the names of favorite songs on individual index cards. Mix cards up in a pile and let a child pull one out at random. Read the card to solve the mystery of what song to sing.

▶ **Plan hands-on activities** frequently. Pass out instruments or noise makers to provide the sound effects for favorite stories; for example, small, medium, and large blocks clacked together can represent the littlest, middle, and biggest Billy Goats Gruff.

▶ **Use props to help children focus,** such as flannelboard stories, puppets, and big books.

▶ **Vary circle time activities** so different curricular areas are covered. Language charts are often fun to do, but children need to develop other thinking skills along with language.

SCIENCE Let children relax while they make a rainbow swirl by squeezing drops of different food coloring into a see-through container of water. (See *ideas on pages 29-31.*)

MATH Mix up everyone's shoes and let children take turns finding a matching pair.

ART/MUSIC Lay out fifteen feet of mural paper and let children draw by making their crayons "dance" to different beats of music.

SOCIAL STUDIES Let children act out job-related actions of community helpers, such as fire fighters or orchestra conductors.

▶ **Give children clear, simple directions.** This applies to guiding appropriate behavior as well as explaining the process of a particular activity.

▶ **Work cooperatively with staff.** While one teacher is leading the circle time activity, another staff member or volunteer could be sitting amongst the children. Ask adults to sit between children who might create distractions. Use nonverbal ways to keep children's focus on the activity. Often this simply means putting a hand on a shoulder or knee.

▶ **Use positive management strategies to prevent interruptions.** Children waiting to participate tend to be more patient and able to focus better when reassured specifically they will get a turn. For instance, say, *"I'm going to listen to Jamal first, then I will listen to Beatrice, and next Kasha."*

▶ **Plan a beginning, middle, and end** to your circle time. Varying the pace helps hold attention. Plan activities so there is a balance of sitting and listening as well as active participation. Transition activities, such as calming finger plays, songs, and stress reducing relaxation activities are nice for the beginning and end. Pace the activity as if you are biking up a big hill. Start up the side, slowly increase your pace, have a great ride on the plateau, delight in the exuberant ride down the hill, and then catch your breath while you coast to the end of the ride! When circle time ends with a quiet activity, and an effective plan for transition, the activity following circle time starts off on the right foot.

WHO'S IN CHARGE?

by Mary Beth Spann Minucci

During a recent visit to a neighborhood nursery school, I learned that all circle times are not created equal. The teacher's approach to this traditional get-together time can make or break the scene for the children.

In preparation for this visit to a group of four year olds, I had already told the teacher she could sit back, relax, and be entertained—no need for her to provide a thing! On the actual day of the visit, I arrived at the classroom door with a bag of puppets and craft supplies, and an action plan for how I wanted to use my puppets with children.

I began by pretending one of my puppets was shy and was afraid to talk to the group. My idea was to engage the shyest-looking child in helping to coax my puppet out. But the teacher changed my plans by choosing a child herself. Then, I wanted the puppet to read a poem to the class. The teacher again took charge by saying, *"Oh! We know that poem, don't we? Let's see if the puppet would like us to recite our newest poem instead."* Every time I asked the group a question, the teacher answered for them. Every time I tried to play a rhyming game or tell a joke, the teacher verbalized before the children had a chance to think. Finally I gave up and let her run the show.

It wasn't that the teacher meant to be so controlling—I'm certain she was just enthusiastic and wanted to help. But, in fact, this teacher's inability to let go of circle time prevented others' thoughts from surfacing. The experience made me think back to the days when I conducted circle time in my own classroom. Was I too much in control back then, or was I able to really listen to my children's ideas?

The following list of questions may help you reflect on how your circle time works in your classroom.

- *Why do I have circle time?* Is it a time to teach a lesson or a time to allow children to share—or both?
- *What are my circle time rules?* Do I include children in the rule-making process? Are the rules negative (No talking without raising hands.) or positive (Listen to each other.)? Is there a reason for each rule? Are my rules appropriate to my children's ages and stages—or am I setting us up for failure by expecting too much? Are my rules flexible or rigid?
- *Is my circle time too long or too short?* Are my children enthusiastic for the whole sitting? Do I have a strategy in place for children who don't want to participate?
- *Do I allow children the opportunity to lead circle time without much help?* Do I allow them to share feelings and ideas without telling them what to say? Do I use circle time to actively listen to children?
- *When a visitor conducts circle time, can I allow the visitor to take over and interact with children as he or she wishes?* Can I use this opportunity to "kid watch" and see the class from a child's eye view?

Knowing the best ways to conduct circle time takes time—time to know when to expect certain behaviors and time to learn when to relax. Most important to keep in mind is that circle time is not a one-person, teacher-run show. The most rewarding circle times allow for lots of stars to shine.

KEEP IT ACTIVE!

by Gail P. Jones

Circle time is sometimes less than a pleasure because children get restless and begin to misbehave. The main reason this happens is NOT because you haven't planned an interesting circle time, but rather because young children are naturally active and need to be given the opportunity to move at regular intervals or they become restless!. By planning for this active involvement throughout your circle time activities, you'll notice children have longer attention spans, forget to touch their neighbors, and participate eagerly.

MORNING CIRCLE

Here are some simple ways to get children physically involved in circle time at the beginning of the day.

▲ **Getting Seated** Do children have a special place in a circle or do they sit in a group facing the bulletin board? Let's pretend it's February and you have laminated hearts with names on the front and Velcro on the back. Put them out on the rug in a circle, rosebud, rows, or whatever arrangement will work best for you. Tell children or sing, *"We're ready, we're ready, we're ready for circle. Please find your own name and get ready too."* Be sure to say, *"I love the way Mary is ready on her special heart, with her hands folded and legs crossed. Thank you, Mary."* to encourage others to assemble quickly. Then begin with a song that involves children with clapping or, for young children, covering their eyes when their name is called:

"Hello___, are you here today; peek-a-boo; I see you; come and play." (Encourage each child to show his face on *"Peek-a-boo."*)

▲ **Picking Helpers** Assuming helpers are posted each day on a helper chart, you can begin by asking children if they know who the calendar helper is today by looking at the name. Say, *"Let's all clap for ____, our calendar helper today."* Let the calendar helper decide what day it is and what number heart he needs to put on the calendar. Then that person asks everyone to get their "wishing *arms*" ready and they can sing as they swing their arms across in front of themselves: *"We wish you a happy Monday, we wish you a happy Monday, we wish you a happy Monday, all day long."* The same person can then think of a simple exercise such as clapping and lead everyone in doing that action the same number of times as the date.

▲ **The Weather Helper** The weather helper can decide what the weather is and put a pointer on the appropriate picture and lead the other children in a simple song with movements such as: *"If it's cloudy and you know it, do this..."* (hands like a cloud overhead) to the tune of "If You're Happy and You Know It."

▲ **The Main Topic for the Day** Whether the main object of the circle time is "Show 'n Tell," to explain a new center activity, or to simply get going for the day, use a puppet for your introduction.

Involve children with giving "three silent cheers" or clapping for their friends as they contribute to the group activity. If a child tells about his pet puppy, let the other children pretend to be little puppies for a few minutes. If they get physical, they'll listen for a much longer period of time. You might end the circle time by asking each child to give his neighbor a hug before going to the next activity.

But, no matter how much physical activity you introduce, it's still vital that you plan for your particular group's attention span, always ending your circle time on a positive note, so they'll want to do it again soon!

TODDLER TIME

WIGGLY TODDLERS IN A CIRCLE

by Jeannine Perez

I'm hiding, I'm hiding,
and no one knows where.
'Cause all you can see
is my toes and my hair!

Imagine that you are at the most exciting part of a story; you turn the page, glance up, and realize that half of your class has wandered off to play. Others are engrossed with yanking Velcro shoe fasteners back and forth, back and forth.

Thoroughly defeated, you wonder, "*Is it unrealistic to expect toddlers to sit together at all for group time? Is it even worth the hassle?*" YES, it is. Coming together, even for brief periods several times a day, can pull together everything you are trying to teach, provide structure, set patterns of behavior and socialization, encourage listening skills, and expand vocabulary and language skills. It is also an excellent way for you to observe and understand your children.

To make group times work for you, it is good to think about goals for your times together. Clarify your own expectations of what will happen and plan for some alternative activities to pull everything together. Purchase a books of fingerplays and short songs. *Ring A Ring O' Roses: Stories, Games and, Finger Plays for Pre-school Children*, is a recipe book of ideas. You can quickly find a new finger play for any occasion. Most of them are so old that original sources cannot be credited.

Begin with several books and a little planning time, and your circle times will be all that you want them to be (at least most of the time). Here are some planning tips.

- Consider your expectations for your group. Are they too high? It may be helpful to plan many, very short gatherings during the day, and then build on them as group times become an accepted routine that everyone enjoys.
- Repetition is a good teaching tool. It lets children know what to expect and helps them interact with the activities. Encourage participation by including short rhymes, songs, and pictures books that are repetitious or incorporate counting. There are many fingerplays and songs using the numbers one to five. We love the song "Ten in the Bed," but I may begin the year with only five in the bed.

There were five in the bed
and the little one said
"Roll over, roll over."
So they all rolled over
and one fell out.
There were four in the bed.

Children love the rhythm and movements that accompany this song, and there are several picture books with this rhyme. "Are You Sleeping" is a good song because you sing a line and children repeat it. When we make up our own songs, we often use this tune.

- Provide both familiar songs and routines for stability, structure, and security, but always add something new to challenge, stimulate, and expand knowledge. We have favorites that are always included, but I try to introduce something new each time. Toddlers are comfortable with what's familiar and are also curious enough to love new words, songs, and ideas. Beginning with the same song or fingerplay acts as a signal for group time and gives young children a sense of order.
- Establish conduct and space rules (as few as possible) from the beginning, and reinforce them consistently. Individual rug squares set up a defined space for each child and help reduce pushing and kicking. Sometimes, the rugs become part of a song or story, becoming imaginary houses, jets to travel to faraway places, or flower gardens.

- Encourage children to participate in every possible way. Stop in the middle of a new story and ask: "*What do you think happens next?*" Make up actions to songs and stories like *The Three Bears* and *The Gunniwolf*. Use puppets or let children take turns retelling the story with puppets or making up their own stories.

- Provide a variety of activities in each short session. Think of music, physical stretching and movement, a story, fingerplays, and maybe even a simple science experiment. You do not need to do all of these activities in each short group time, but include them in daily plans.
- Let the time of day help you plan what you will do during that group time. For example, active and stimulating activities are best done before free time or outside time. Children may be sleepy or grumpy early in the morning, and also tired and cranky at the end of a long day. Or they may be full of vim and vigor and ready to go! We begin each day with a short fingerplay that properly welcomes everyone.

I have a great big message.
It isn't very new.
It only has three words
and it says,
"I love you!"

We go around the circle, pointing to and naming each child. It seems to set a caring tone for the day.

- Transition activities help give direction for lunch and relaxing and quieting activities are best planned before naptime. Many times we meet at the end of the day and talk about what happened during the day and something that will happen the next day. It helps children gain the beginnings of a time concept, sequence, and continuity.
- Be flexible, ready to change, shorten, expand upon, or adapt your activities according to the mood of the group. Nothing is sadder than a teacher grimly finishing a story just because it was planned. Often telling a story rather than sharing a book is helpful at the beginning of the day because the eye contact keeps children involved, and it is simple to shorten the telling if children begin getting restless.
- Most important, have fun! One uncontrolled and noisy circle time will not ruin the children, your program, or your reputation as a teacher! With the best of intentions and plans, bad days will occasionally happen. It's all part of the world of young children!

TUNE IN TO "SHOW AND TELL"

by Sherry Burrell

Often, the "Show and Tell" part of circle time becomes so full of the same old toys and give-away trinkets that even the adults "tune out!" It can be difficult for young children to pay attention to their friends whose language skills are not yet fully developed, and it can become almost impossible to maintain attentive listeners when the items being displayed are so familiar that there seems to be nothing new to say.

However, there are ways to take even the most basic "show and tell" items, and use them to capitalize on the "teachable moment" that often emerges from this "sharing time" experience. Follow these simple steps, and begin to enjoy a more meaningful "Show and Tell" time!

ENLIST PARENTS' SUPPORT

Send a note to all parents explaining that you are working hard to help their children develop their "Show and Tell" skills. Clearly state that the kinds of items that will be the most valuable for sharing are those that are somewhat unusual in nature. Ask parents to discourage their children from bringing in weapons, war toys, action figures, small toy cars, stuffed animals, dolls, and trinkets from fast-food restaurants. Parents will then wonder, *"What's left?"*

Give parents a list of suggested items that will bring more variety to the experience. A handmade item, an unusual (but safe) tool from the tool box or from the kitchen drawer, an item with an unusual texture, smell, or taste, or an item that is "scientific" (magnifying glass) or "historical" (postcard of an old fort), would all be wonderful suggestions. Help the parent and the child view the "Show and Tell" experience as an opportunity for the child to teach something new to all her friends!

Remind parents and children that the sharing time could also be an opportunity for the child to simply tell about something. If parents support the child by sending in a short note about their child's topic, you will be better able to support the child's description of an event (a family party), an experience (going to a concert), or even a dream.

SCHEDULE ENOUGH TIME

There are many ways to handle the scheduling of "Show and Tell."

- Some teachers use part of every circle time, and every child shares something every day.
- Others hold "sharing time" only on certain days.
- Some assign days of the week so that children only share when it is their day to do so.
- Still others keep it open and flexible, and when a child brings something in to share, the teacher attempts to make time for it.

There is no one "right" way

to schedule this experience. As you consider your own schedule, ask yourself if you have planned enough time so that the experience is as valuable as it can be. Rather than trying to "get it over with as quickly as possible," why not work on turning it into a really meaningful learning tool?

CAPTURE THE "TEACHABLE MOMENT"

In order to capitalize on the "teachable moments" during "Show and Tell," you must view this time as valuable teaching time. Be ready to extend and enrich what the child brings by using it as a tool for teaching all the concepts you work so hard to teach already. While sharing time is in progress, ask yourself the simple questions listed below. Be ready to "capitalize!"

❍ Are there any number, color, or shape concepts in this item? (Three red leaves plus one yellow leaf; A square box with nine sea shells to lay out and count; How many circles do you see in this photograph?)

❍ Are there any patterns or designs to point out? *("Look at the stripes on this fabric. If we lay out these sticks, we could make a pattern of long, long, short, long, long...what comes next?")*

❍ Are there a few simply-named objects that could be used for a quick memory game? *("If we line up these four toys and one is removed, can anyone tell me which one is gone?" "Can anyone put them back in the same order I just had them in?")*

❍ Are there a few sets of items that can be used for a quick classification activity? *("Let's put these fake bugs in piles by number of legs. By size. By color. By type.")*

❍ Do the items lend themselves to a quick re-organization to make a simple graph? *("Let's take these coins and arrange them with all the similar ones together in lines. Now which line is longer? Shorter? How many of each type do we have all lined up? How many altogether?")*

❍ Does the sharing remind you of a song, a fingerplay, a story, or a rhyme? (If a child brought in a rubber spider, remind children of the nursery rhyme, "Little Miss Muffett," or of the song/fingerplay, "The Eensy Weensy Spider.")

❍ If several children have had their turns, and nothing interesting has been added, try this! Stop, have those few children stand up, and ask the others if they can recall what each child shared and in what order they took their turns!

Stay on your toes. Listen carefully. There are countless opportunities in each child's "Show and Tell" to turn a rather boring object into a spontaneous, fun learning tool. By creating on-the-spot memory games, graphs, counting games, rhythms and rhymes, songs and more, you will motivate children to pay much closer attention to what is going on, and, at the same time, you will become inspired to turn something boring into an exciting event!

CIRCLE TIME CHOICES

by Barbara F. Backer

Learning to make choices is as important as learning reading and math. We all face choices daily. Some are easy. *(What color socks shall I wear?)* Others are so important, they can change our lives. *(What do I want to be when I grow up?)* As teachers, we hope our students will meet the future with the self-confidence and experience to make sensible choices, even when they are challenged by peer and social pressures.

Making wise choices is best learned through doing. Offer opportunities each day for children to make safe choices in your classroom—circle time is a good place to start.

Children gain confidence in their own ability to make choices when they see their classmates making decisions in a friendly environment where every opinion is valued. Here are some circle time ideas to get you started.

- When children are dancing to the "Hokey Pokey," let each child, in turn, decide what to "put in" next. Honor all choices. A child can choose a body part(s) or an object. *("You put your hair in, you take your hair out...." Or, "You put a LEGO in, you take a LEGO out....")*

  For variety, ask a child, *"Should we put our ______ in by ourselves or while we hold hands with a friend?"* Or ask, *"Should we do this standing on one foot or on both feet?"*
- Movement activities offer many opportunities for choices. Will you dance with a streamer or a scarf? What color scarf do you want? Shall we move backward or forward? Should we slide sideways or gallop?
- If your children are marching to music, ask them to choose a rhythm instrument. Early in the year, offer a choice between two items. *"Do you want shakers or sticks?"* Be sure there are enough of each to provide every child a choice. If you have eight sets of shakers and five sets of sticks, that doesn't provide a "choice" for ten children. Ideally, you'll have ten of each.

  If your number of identical instruments is limited, offer this choice: *"Do you want an instrument to shake or one that you hit?"* The child then makes a selection from a group of similar instruments. In one box you'll offer tambourines, jingle sticks, maracas, and other things to shake. In another, cymbals, sticks, triangles, and drums—instruments to hit.

  At another time, asking *"Do you want an instrument made of metal or one with no metal?"* offers other options.
- Voting is a decision-making process that takes place in a group. Children can vote on which of two books to hear first, or which of three songs to sing first. Do read/sing all of the choices so no one feels left out.

We want children to feel that making choices is a pleasant experience. If their vote doesn't "win," they still get to sing their favorite song.

During circle time, sing and act out songs that offer opportunities for choices. Be daring and sing them in a new way. Make up your own variations. Here are two examples.

This Is the Way (Tune: "Mulberry Bush")

This is the way we
build with blocks,
Build with blocks,
build with blocks.
This is the way we
build with blocks
When we are at school.

Each child in turn chooses a school activity for the group to sing about. She shows the motion for children to follow as they sing.

"Old MacDonald Had a Farm"

Enjoy the variety and the giggles as each child has a turn to be "Old MacDonald" and then tell what she "had" and what was on it. Substitute the child's words in the underlined spots.

Brian Boston had a bike;
E-I-E-I-O.
And on that bike he had a
horn; E-I-E-I-O.
With a toot-toot here and a
toot-toot there,
Here a toot (etc.)

CHOICES ALL DAY LONG

Offer choices throughout the school day. If you are making snowmen in the art center, children can choose whether to make a large or small snowman, one made of two, three, or four snowballs. They can glue it on their choice of paper and can add as many buttons as they desire.

Set up your classroom to support choices. Have duplicates of materials so that more than one child can play with the dump truck or the pig puppet. Be certain to fill the library shelves with 50% more books than the number of children in your class. That way, the last child to select a book does, indeed, have a choice.

Be certain learning centers are adaptable. Small centers with signs limiting the number of people who can play there eliminate that choice for the rest of the class. If everyone wants to play in the dramatic play area one day, and children are too crowded, help them solve the problem themselves. They can move out the divider walls and make the area larger, decide to set a timer so each child plays an equal amount of time, or think of a creative solution that no adult would ever consider!

Remind yourself to respect children's choices. If you offer a choice, always accept the child's answer. You'll see your children's self confidence grow as they learn to form and express their opinions and to make choices.

IDEAS OFF THE BOOK SHELF

by Paula Gaj Sitarz

If you meet with your children in circle time once (and sometimes twice) a day, it's possible to run out of creative ideas to keep everyone attentive and engaged. Here are some excellent resource books, full of circle time ideas to help you.

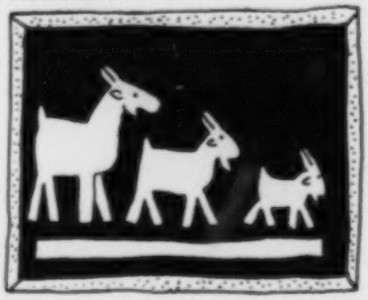
- *Handbook for Storytellers* by Caroline Feller Bauer (American Library Association) is a classic book full of ideas, including stories to share with young children and clear directions for making and presenting board stories—chalk, felt, and magnetic. You'll also learn how to use puppets, do creative dramatics, and create fold-and-cut stories.
- *Kidstuff: A Treasury of Early Childhood Enrichment Materials* edited by Sheila Debs (Guidelines Press) is a "monthly by-mail treasury of programming ideas." Each multi-paged pamphlet contains original material as well as material from other sources on one subject. Topics have included families, the zoo, friendship, insects, and nonsense stories. You'll find ideas for flannelboard stories, creative dramatics, stories to read aloud, and fingerplays. Clear, direct instructions and patterns are included to make and to use puppets and flannelboard characters.
- *Picture Book Story Hours: From Birthdays to Bears* and *More Picture Book Story Hours: From Parties to Pets* by Paula Gaj Sitarz (Libraries Unlimited) each contain over twenty literature-based program plans on a variety of subjects from picnics, bedtime stories, and gardens to bears, food, colors, and music. Each program plan includes stories to read aloud that are annotated with suggestions on how to present each story. Also included are related fingerplays, action rhymes (some original), tell-and-draw stories, poetry, songs, feltboard stories, and creative dramatics.

- Shirley C. Raines and Robert J. Canady offer *Story Stretchers: Activities to Expand Children's Favorite Books* and *More Story Stretchers: More Activities to Expand Children's Favorite Books* (Gryphon House). You'll find excellent lists of books to share at circle time on subjects from families, friendship, and feelings to science, nature, transportation, and seasons. Included are ideas on how to present each book; a synopsis of each title and related activities including creative dramatics, music, and movement ideas; and flannelboard versions of some titles with questions to ask that relate to each story. The selection of books is excellent from *Frederick* by Leo Lionni and *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle to *The Snowy Day* by Ezra Jack Keats and *George and Martha One Fine Day* by George Marshall.
- Marc Brown's four books of finger plays and action rhymes are perfect to share with young children. His illustrations, whether in black and white or full color, are appealing and playful. Each fingerplay includes illustrations that demonstrate how to do each activity. In *Play Rhymes, Hand Rhymes, Finger Rhymes, and Party Rhymes* you'll find familiar rhymes like "I'm a Little Teapot" and "The Noble Duke of York" and the less familiar ones like "Five Little Goblins" and "Ten Little Candles." Some rhyming songs include the music.

Joanna Cole and Stephanie Calemnson have compiled a collection of play rhymes in *The Eensy Weensy Spider* (Morrow Junior Books) that can be done as fingerplays and action rhymes. Each rhyme has step-by-step illustrations that indicate what action should be taken on each line. Musical arrangements are included. Also extremely useful is a list of sources for fingerplays and action rhymes.

Stories to Draw by Jerry J. Mallett and Marian R. Bartch (Freline, Inc.) is a delightful collection of stories. As you tell each one, you draw pictures to accompany the text. The picture slowly turns into a final surprising illustration that relates to the story.

Judy Sierra's *The Flannel Board Storytelling Book: 36 Stories, Poems & Songs & Over 250 Patterns* (H.W. Wilson Co.) is an excellent collection of stories to tell on the flannelboard and with ideas to invite children's participation. There are also follow-up activities included for the stories. You'll find such favorites as "Johnny-Cake," "The Three Billy Goats," "The Turnip," "Henny Penny," and "The Little Red Hen."



One of the best collections of poems for circle time is *Read Aloud Rhymes for the Very Young* by Jack Prelutsky with expressive, playful illustrations by Marc Brown. Over 200 poems for every occasion are included from picnics and birthdays to mud and sneezes, from snowmen and food to children and animals.

Lynda Roberts' book *Mitt Magic: Fingerplays for Finger Puppets* is a useful collection of fingerplays including "Five Little Speckled Frogs," "Snowmen," and "Five Little Pumpkins." Simple patterns for finger and glove puppets are included to be used while doing the fingerplays. The fingerplays are simple and appealing, and the patterns for the puppets are easy to copy.

One of the most comprehensive collections of songs (125) to share with children is *Singing Bee! A Collection of Favorite Children's Songs* compiled by Jane Hart. You'll find lullabies, Mother Goose rhymes, fingerplays, singing games, folk songs, holiday songs, and rounds. Most of the songs are well known. Notes are included for ways to turn the songs into fingerplays and singing games. Lively color and black and white illustrations by Anita Lobel compliment the songs and make this an exquisite and classic collection for your book shelf.

"MOVING" A CIRCLE

by Margery A. Kranyik

Your circle or group time is a fine time for movement activities. Working with children in this setting enables you to start exploring upper body movement and gain confidence managing the group before you move on to movement exploration in a larger space. Your children will enjoy the following activities designed to be performed from a sitting position.

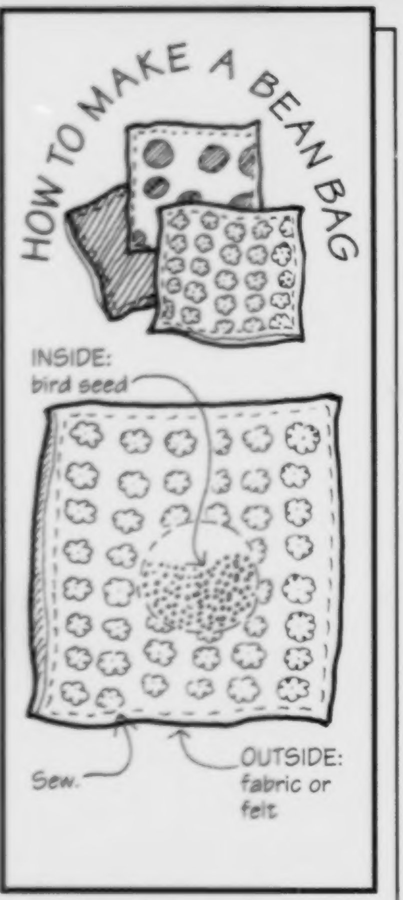
● **Pantomime** Emphasize that actions are done without words or sound effects. Demonstrate a pantomime and have children guess what you are doing. Possibilities include: opening a jar; taking the wrapper off a straw; making a sandwich; feeling cold, happy, or sad. After children are comfortable with the activity, ask them to think of a motion, pantomime it, and have other children guess. (*"Can you think of an action to do that we can guess?"*)

● **Stretching** Help children develop an awareness of the upper torso. Ask them to do the following movements: *"Reach up with your arms as far as you can. Stretch! Stretch one arm up. Now stretch the other arm. Stretch one arm and then the other. One, two, three, four. Wiggle your fingers. Make your hands go around in circles. Try in the other direction. Sway back and forth to one side and then the other."* (Make sure children understand vocabulary, such as *stretch* and *sway*.)

● **Hands** *"Let's see how many ways our hands can move."* Encourage clapping, finger wiggling, wrist bending, finger snapping, fist tapping, tapping parts of hands with fingers. *"How many different sounds can we make with our hands?"* Have children demonstrate the motions.

● **Follow the Leader** The person designated "it" decides on a sitting down motion for all to copy. Children volunteer as they think of a motion for to make. Possibilities include: clapping, tapping head, legs, or shoulders, blinking, nodding head. Everyone can chant: *"This is what (child's name) can do. Everybody do it too."*

● **Bean Bag Fun** Distribute a bean bag to each child. Ask children to: *"Make the bean bag high...low. Place it on the side of you...behind you...in front of you."* Try some balancing — making sure everyone knows the meaning of the word "balance." *"Can you balance the beanbag on your nose? On your forehead? Shoulder? Wrist?"* Let children choose where they wish to balance. Try it with partners. Need more bean bags? Perhaps a parent can help make some from remnants.



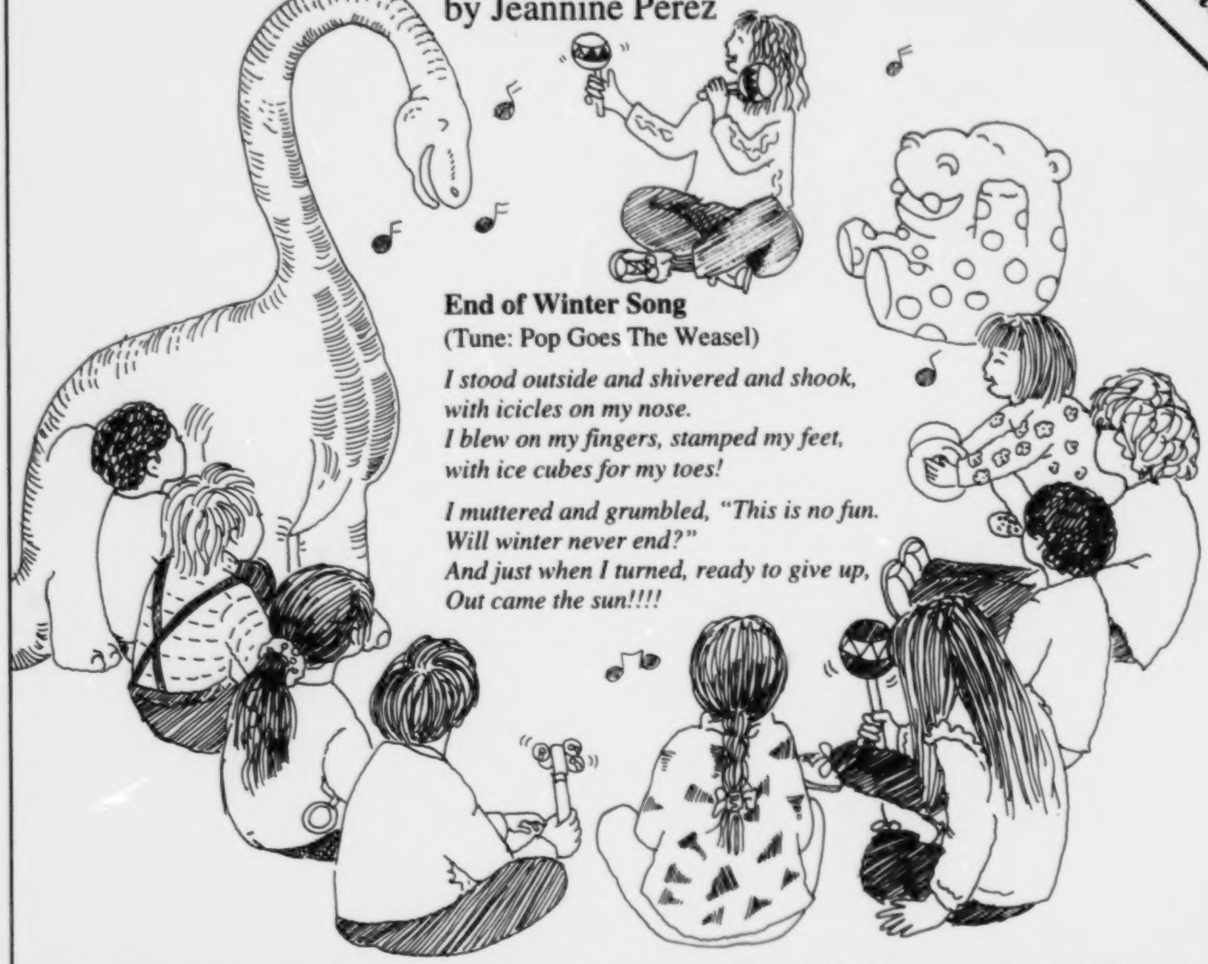
● **Sing a Song** Teach the children "Can you clap?" and "The Fly on My Nose" from *More Piggyback Songs* (Totline). Each song can be sung with motions from a group sitting position. Try some variations on "Look at the Way" (Tune: "Mulberry Bush"). *"Look at the way we clap our hands, clap our hands, clap our hands. Look at the way we clap our hands, everyday at preschool."* Have children add other appropriate verses using upper body motions.

Be creative! Encourage your children to be creative. Discuss other possibilities for upper body actions. Add recorded music; use rhythm instruments. Get your circle and group time moving!

Preschool Song Writers

Singing in Your Circle

by Jeannine Perez



End of Winter Song

(Tune: Pop Goes The Weasel)

I stood outside and shivered and shook,
with icicles on my nose.
I blew on my fingers, stamped my feet,
with ice cubes for my toes!

I muttered and grumbled, "This is no fun.
Will winter never end?"
And just when I turned, ready to give up,
Out came the sun!!!!

This above song was written as a class song after a week of sunless, frigid, Midwest weather. Thinking of the words and actions helped the sun emerge in our classroom even before we saw it outside. Singing can do that!

As teachers, we often feel pressured to help our children achieve basic academic concepts as a strong base for future school years. But, I believe we can foster knowledge even stronger than rote learning each time everyday problems are solved, new experiences offered, and vocabulary expanded to describe those experiences. Music provides these skills when children are given opportunities and the chance to creatively add to songs and fingerplays during circle time.

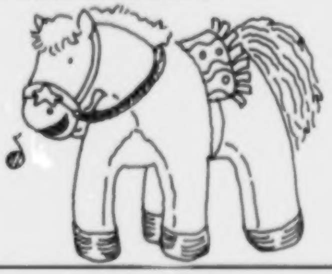
How can music become a tool in classroom learning?

Learn new songs each week. Start the year offering familiar songs and gradually increase your collection of favorite songs that children already know. Because it's hard to think of songs when you're on the spot, write titles (or the whole song) on index cards, and keep them handy for odd spots in each day when a song might fit in, help with a transition time, soothe angry feelings, or help children calm down and relax. Then set your children to creating new words for familiar tunes and new movements for action songs at circle time...

Directions Songs

Sing directions and questions to children, using a familiar tune or chant in a rhythm. Encourage children to sing answers to questions using familiar tunes. For example: (Tune: "Farmer in the Dell")

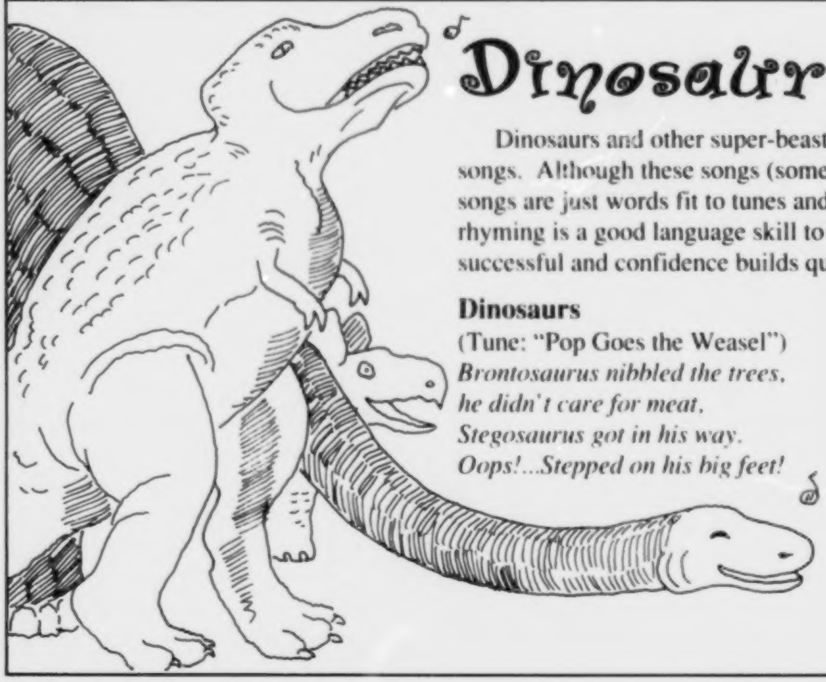
It's time to pick up toys.
It's time to pick up toys.
Hi-ho the derry-o, it's
time to pick up toys.



Action Songs

It's fun to sing songs with actions (such as "If You're Happy and You Know It"). Children are immediately involved. To encourage creative thinking, make up new group actions to express happiness, such as turning around, clapping over your head, or jumping with joy! If children are hesitant to add their own ideas, you might say, *"I wonder if we can think of other ways our bodies can move to show that we're happy."* To expand language, ask children to use their words and tell you what they are doing.

Songs like "Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes" and "I'm a Little Teapot" are also good action songs. Substitute your own actions and body parts or change the title and words completely. "I'm A Little Red Car" or "I'm A Little Computer" might be more recognizable to pre-schoolers than a teapot. Ask them, *"How would a car (or computer) move?"*



Dinosaur Songs

Dinosaurs and other super-beasts are always an inspiring source for silly songs. Although these songs (somewhat) rhyme, most of our impromptu songs are just words fit to tunes and rhyming is not so important (although rhyming is a good language skill to encourage). Anything volunteered is successful and confidence builds quickly.

Dinosaurs
(Tune: "Pop Goes the Weasel")
Brontosaurus nibbled the trees,
he didn't care for meat,
Stegosaurus got in his way.
Oops!...Stepped on his big feet!

Sleepy Time
(Tune: "Pop Goes the Weasel")
Brontosaurus went to sleep,
with his head upon a tree,
Tyrannosaurus started to creep,
He thought, "Supper's there for me!"
Brontosaurus raised his head,
yawned and shook his tail,
"Let me be! Go away!" he said.
"I won't fit in your lunch pail."

Nonsense Songs

Build up a repertoire of nonsensical songs and sing them often to familiar tunes. It is easy to feel successful when songs are supposed to be silly, and nonsense often defuses angry situations. Substitute new words (or sounds) in songs. The words don't have to make sense. Use an ordinary "happening" as inspiration for a song. Missing shoes after naptime is a common problem. A three year old helped me make up this song:

Dear, oh dear.
What can I do?
I've looked and I've looked
for my purple shoe.

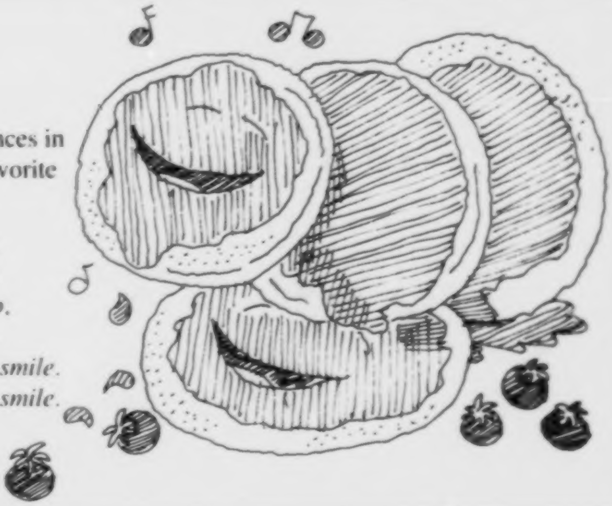
Dear, oh dear.
What can I do?
I really need
my purple shoe.

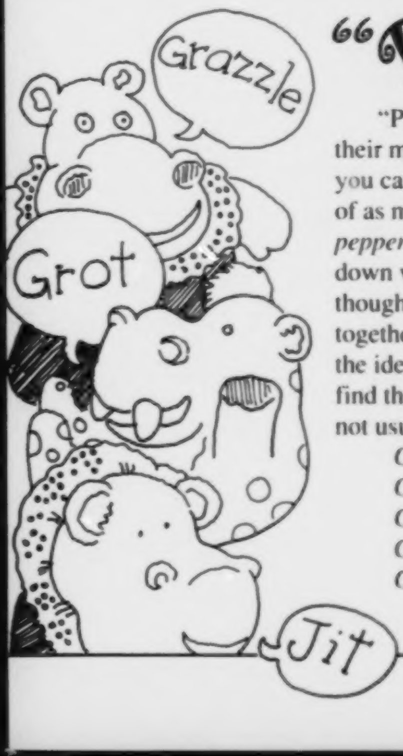
Food Songs

Branch out to include other common daily experiences in your songs. You might sing songs about everyone's favorite foods (Tune: "Are You Sleeping?"):

I love ice cream.
I love ice cream.
Frosty cones,
with a swirl.
I feel good inside,
licking with my tongue.
Round and round the swirl.
Round and round the swirl.

I love pancakes.
I love pancakes.
Butter and syrup,
Blueberries too.
Eat them with a smile.
Eat them with a smile.
Good for you.
Good for you.





"Play with Words" Songs

"Play with words," and write your own poems and songs. Think of words that sound like their meanings (like *lovely*, *murmur*, and *ugly*). Take a word and think of as many words as you can that rhyme with that word (*blue*). It is also fun to take a word, like *pizza*, and think of as many words as possible to describe that word (*hot, round, pie, sausage, red, spicy, pepperoni*). When you get comfortable and creative with your use of language, begin to write down what children say on paper. Then rearrange the words and rhymes into your own thoughts and poems. You can say them, chant them to a beat, or sing them. This one, put together over a few weeks, can be chanted or sung to "Row, Row, Your Boat" and reinforces the idea that words are fun and do not always have to rhyme or even be real words. You'll find that children love the sound of new words and will remember words and phrases that are not usually heard by pre-schoolers.

Grump
Grumps, grizzle, grackle, grit.
Girmple, grouch away.
Griggle, grott, gripe, and grunt.
Grumble, grazzle, gray.

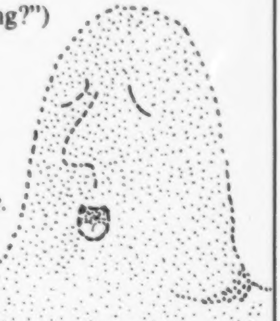
Jump
Jitter, jostle, jiggle, jump.
Jabber, jangle, jit.
Jerky, jarring, jingle, jog, jostle just a bit.
(Kids are also very good at adding extra syllables, if needed!)

Theme Songs

Thematic units in science and math can also lead to songwriting. Here are two songs that we made up when we explored rocks.

Rocks
(Tune: "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star")
Big rocks, little rocks,
Hard ones too.
I'll go hunting rocks with you.
Rocks are magic,
rocks are fun,
I'll find you a special one!

Sand
(Tune: "Are You Sleeping?")
Sand in our food,
Sand in the air,
Sand in my clothes,
Sand in my hair.
Sand tracked in,
We find it here and there.
It's everywhere!
It's everywhere!

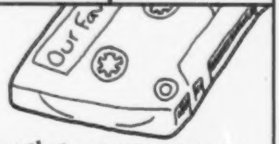


Abstract Concept Songs

Use music, rhymes, and poems to present more abstract concepts like sequence, categories, and opposites. We made up a game at circle time by thinking of words and their opposites. Although this concept is difficult for very young children, they will come up with creative "opposites"—words that might not have come to your mind!

Opposites (Tune: "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star")

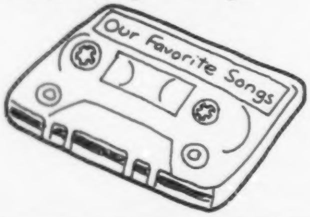
Popsicles are cold, the sun is hot.
Dandelions are soft, but ice cubes are not.
Leprechauns like green, valentines are red.
Wake up in the morning, at night sleep in bed.
Stones are smooth, pebbles are rough.
My "thinking" part's tired, enough is enough!

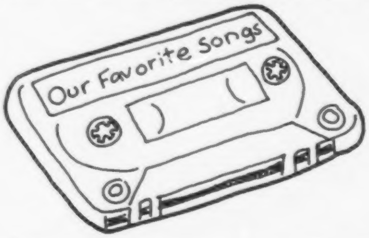


Songs to Go

Our songs become connections to home also. Because children are so proud of the songs that are our own, we make tapes of them, adding to the tape over a period of time. For the dinosaur songs, we found a background tape of jungle noises and played it softly as children sang their dinosaur songs. Other songs were sung to a piano, to the beat of child-made instruments, soft clapping or tapping, or as is. At the end-of-the-year potluck, I gave each family a tape of the class singing their favorite original songs.

Our Favorite Songs





IN THE BOOK CORNER

FEELINGS IN THE CIRCLE

by Karel Kilimnik

Circle time is a good place to gather up children's feelings and air them. Books can provide a non-threatening way to approach sensitive topics. Reading a book together provides both a starting place and a common point of reference.

Cleversticks by Bernard Ashley (Crown) should be in every young child's classroom. Ling Sung has started school but by his third day he has decided he doesn't ever want to return. What happened? Everyone has something that they can do well and get public recognition. Everyone except Ling Sung. Manjit can write her name; Sharron buttons her jacket; Anis can fasten his apron at the back. Ling Sung accidentally discovers what he can do—eat with chopsticks. Everyone wants to learn and the cookies start flying as everyone tries to master them (even the teachers). Ling Sung feels so proud that now he is able to both share his skill and ask the other children to help him learn to do the things they can do. The illustrations practically jump off the page, creating a vibrant multicultural classroom.

That wonderful aardvark family is back! D. W. is learning how to ride her bike without training wheels. Kids often want to plunge right in and do something like ride a bike without taking the time to learn how to do it safely. Slow them down by reading *D. W. Rides Again!* by Marc Brown (Little, Brown)

D. W. persuades her Dad to remove her training wheels and then proceeds to crash. Big Brother Arthur takes over and gives D. W. safety lessons, teaching her how to use hand signals.

Why Am I Different? by Norma Simon (Albert Whitman) explores "difference" by looking at many facets of life —physical differences (size and hair color), physical conditions such as allergies, different abilities and preferences, and family and neighborhood experiences. All are illustrated in ways that are real to children:

- a child who is getting a large front tooth
- a red-haired child in a family of blondes and brunettes
- a child whose family moves a lot
- a child who has matzos in his lunchbox

Simon sets the tone with an introduction to adults discussing ways in which children compare themselves to each other and all the reassurance they need from adults that being different is okay.

Misunderstandings between friends occur all the time. Friends argue and squabble and declare, *"I'm not your friend!"* How do we help children mend their friendships? By helping them realize that friendships are more important than objects.

In *Rosie and the Yellow Ribbon* by Paula DePaolo (Little, Brown), Rosie learns that friendship is more important than her favorite hair ribbon. Rosie has a special collection of colorful hair ribbons she shows to her best friend Lucille. Rosie has to run into the house. She returns to the stoop to find Lucille gone, her ribbons in disarray, and her favorite yellow ribbon missing. Rosie immediately accuses Lucille of taking the ribbon. Lucille denies it. Their friendship is torn apart. The ribbon eventually turns up in an unexpected place and the two friends make up.

Making friends can be difficult to do. Nancy Carlson, with tongue firmly in cheek, provides a way of talking about how to make friends in *How to Lose All Your Friends* (Viking). Rules like Never Smile, Never Share, and Be a Bully, stir up heated conversations about how it feels when children do these things and what friends should do for each other.

STILL IN THE BOOK CORNER

READ ME A SONG

by Sandra Malcolm

This month the books selected will be very familiar to most children because they are the stories to songs they may already sing in school. If not, this will be a wonderful time to teach new songs. By reading the text to a song, children see the connection between language in all forms. A fun song book to use with young children is *A Collection of 51 Songs from Raffi*, illustrated by Joyce Yamamoto (Crown).

TODAY IS MONDAY

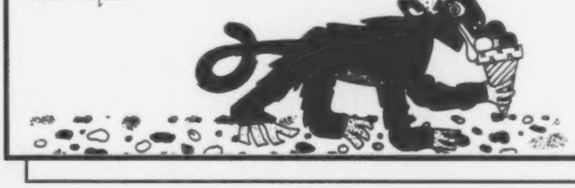
adapted by Eric Carle (Philomel Books), uses unique characters and artistic style to bring to life a nonsensical childhood song.

BEFORE READING, Ask children if they eat the same thing on a certain day of the week. Make a list of foods and days they could always be eaten (for example, Sunday and pancakes).

AFTER READING, Compare the list you made earlier to the one in the story. Are they the same foods or different ones? Ask children if they have heard the words to this story before. (Their answer will depend on whether they have ever sung the song, "Today Is Monday.") Ask them what "zooop" is and why the song writer used that word instead of "soup."

ACTIVITIES

▲ Sing the song "Today Is Monday." This is an excellent song for learning the days of the week.
▲ The inside cover of the book shows how to say, "*Enjoy your meal!*" in seven languages. Teach these phrases to your children so they are aware of how different languages sound when saying the same thing.
▲ Use pieces of different colored tissue paper to show what happens to the colors as they are layered. Demonstrate how Eric Carle uses tissue paper to create his illustrations. Then provide tissue paper and glue for children to make their own pictures using this technique.



THE WHEELS ON THE BUS

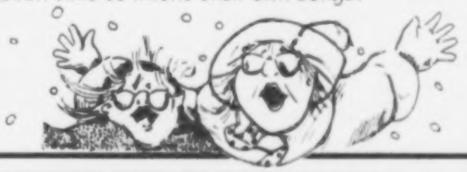
by Maryann Kovalski (Joy Street Books) tells how a grandmother and her two young grandchildren pass the time waiting for a bus by singing, "The Wheels on the Bus." They get so involved in the song that they miss their bus.

BEFORE READING, Ask children to share experiences they have had riding a bus and what they did while waiting for the bus.

AFTER READING, Ask children "Why did Grandma suggest they sing that song?" "Did they enjoy singing it?" "How can you tell?" "Could this be a real story or is it make-believe?"

ACTIVITIES

▲ Let children act out the story as it is re-read. Have everyone help sing the song.
▲ Talk about other forms of transportation (airplane, ship, taxi, train). Make up new words and illustrations for different types of transportation. Create a class book.
▲ Provide a keyboard and some system (i.e. color-coding) for the eight notes used in the song. Encourage children to play the song. Explain that this is how musicians read. The notes tell the musicians which key to press. Stress the fact that music is a form of language—we can read it; it tells us something; we can speak it; we can write it. Using color-coded notes, allow children time to invent their own songs.



OLD MACDONALD HAD A FARM

by Tracey Campbell Pearson (Dial Books) combines delightful illustrations and familiar song lyrics in this book to portray the busy day of a farmer and his wife.

BEFORE READING, Ask children what they think of when you mention farms to them. Name some things found on farms. Make a list of these on chart paper.

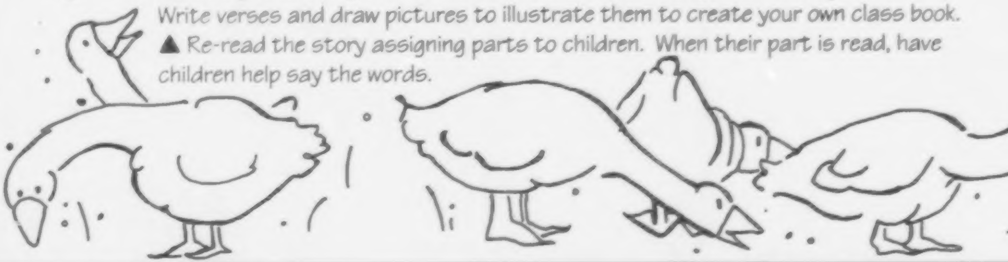
AFTER READING, Ask children if the farmer and his wife were busy all day long and what were they doing? Did they notice things that the author added to the story that aren't in the song?

ACTIVITIES

▲ Make flannelboard cut-outs to use with the story. Re-tell the story. Make the book and cut-outs available for children to use independently. They will feel very successful with the book because it is familiar to them.

▲ Change the story to "Old MacDonald Had a School (amusement park, circus)." Write verses and draw pictures to illustrate them to create your own class book.

▲ Re-read the story assigning parts to children. When their part is read, have children help say the words.



SHAKE MY SILLIES OUT

Children's entertainer Raffi is joined by illustrator David Allender (Crown Publishers, Inc.) in telling the story of several silly animals who can't get to sleep unless they "shake their sillies out." The fun is catching and soon everyone in the forest is involved.

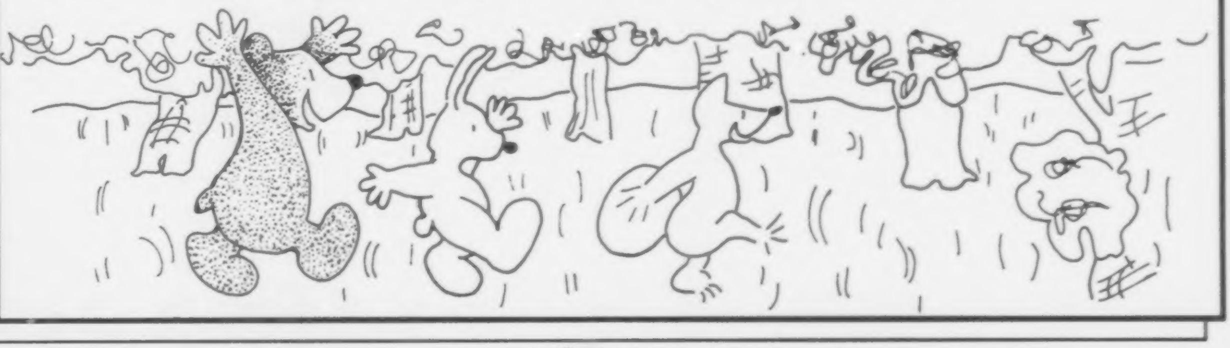
BEFORE READING, Ask children: "Have you ever had trouble falling asleep? What did you do?" "Do you think animals might have trouble sleeping? What could they do to help them fall asleep?"

AFTER READING, Ask children how the animals finally managed to fall asleep. Do they think this is a real or make-believe story? How can they tell?

ACTIVITIES

▲ Sing the song (music and words are included on the last page of the book). The song is also on the Raffi album, *More Singable Songs*. Have children dance to the words of the song as the motions are sung.

▲ Re-read the story as a play. Have three children begin as the bear, the squirrel, and the rabbit. Others can join in as the campers, the counselor, the police officer, the fire fighters, and the Park Ranger.



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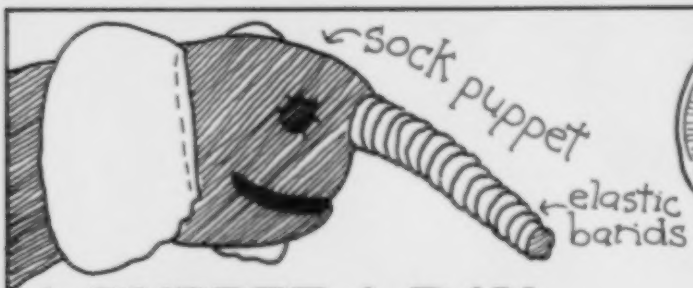
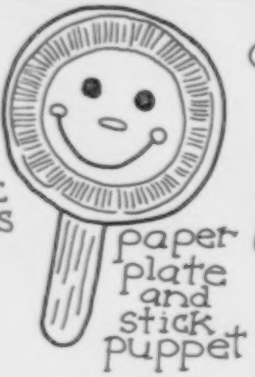
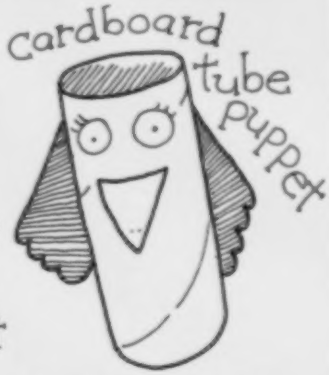



paper plate and stick puppet



A PUPPET A DAY...

by Susan Entz

Why use puppets for circle time learning. Here are 10 good reasons.

1. They are attention grabbers. Children have to pay attention before they can learn.
2. They motivate.
3. They provide a visual focus, a place to look during instruction.
4. They encourage shy or reluctant children to participate.
5. They foster a safe environment, since children can distance themselves emotionally from the negative words and feelings they communicate through the puppet.
6. They allow children to explore real life situations in a safe way.
7. They bolster confidence and self esteem.
8. They foster cooperation.
9. They encourage planning.
10. Puppets are fun!!

HOW TO USE PUPPETS AT CIRCLE TIME

Experiment with different techniques for puppet usage.

◆ **Circle Time Puppet** Use a host puppet to signal children that it is circle time, that they are invited to sit in their designated spots, and to settle down for circle activities. This puppet can also be used to remind children of group rules and procedures or to gently correct children who may be having problems. For example, an Oscar the Grouch puppet might "bluster" at a noisy group, reminding them that they have to be quiet so he can find out what's going on. Or a Larry the Listener puppet (a homemade puppet with gigantic ears) might ask the group to sit quietly so he can hear the story.

◆ **Storytelling Puppet** Make or purchase a puppet depicting the main character from a popular children's story. Hold up the book, but instead of reading it, have the puppet tell the story. Periodically share a picture from the book to set a new scene or introduce a new character. (NOTE: mark them ahead of time!) After circle time, put both the book and the puppet in the library area.

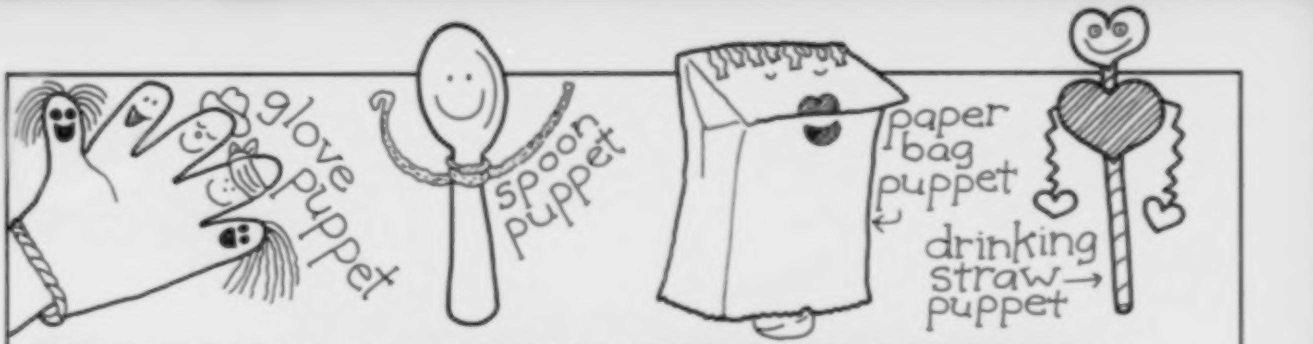
Storytelling puppets can also be used to act out lyrics to a song. Use a farmer puppet for "Old MacDonald Had a Farm" or "B-I-N-G-O" and a cowboy puppet for "She'll Be Comin' Round the Mountain."

◆ **Puppet Drama** During art, let children make fairy tale character stick puppets. When they are completed, help them to act out the story. Store them in a story bag with the book and other props. Make animal characters like the pigs in "The Three Little Pigs" or the goats in "The Three Billy Goats Gruff."

◆ **Puppet Teaching** Reinforce concept learning or a theme using a puppet. Impart information or review previous learning by having the puppet ask the group questions and problem solve at circle time. An Insect Unit could have a ladybug or bee puppet. A fire fighter puppet would make a good introduction to a trip to a fire station or to review happenings after the trip. A carrot puppet could introduce nutrition concepts and a cooking project.

◆ **Child-Made Puppets** Perhaps the most fun of all is to have the group make their own puppets based on a shared interest that emerges from a circle time discussion. Put out simple puppet making materials and let children use their imaginations to create their own characters.

Some children need more structure when first introduced to puppet-making. Provide the materials for a simple stick, paper bag, or cardboard tube puppet. Show children how to use the materials to create the puppets and then suggest that they create characters from a favorite story book, poem, or the unit of study currently under consideration.



PROBLEM SOLVING WITH PUPPETRY

by Susan Root

At circle time we can discuss many common classroom problems with a group of young children. Some typical concerns are taking turns, sharing toys, settling for naps, and learning how to join others in play. Very often however, our best intentions go astray as we end up "lecturing" children about the best solutions to these social issues. Using puppets can be one way out of this common trap.

Children respond to puppets in a way that is dramatically different from their normal responses to either teachers or other children. Puppets encourage even the quietest child to talk and will hold the interest of almost every child so that your discussions can be longer and more involved.

Before introducing puppets for problem solving, you will want to sit down by yourself and make a list of the most common problems in your classroom. Then think of the ones you will want to focus on first. Plan to start with only one puppet at a time. Give your puppet a name and a basic problem. Here is an example of how you could introduce one puppet:

"Boys and girls, I have a new friend I want you to meet. But before I bring her out, I have to tell you a little bit about her." (Usually, at this point, you have sparked the children's interest.) *"Her name is Carla and she is a cow. But she has a little problem."* (Whispering will let children know that you don't want to hurt Carla's feelings and will also guarantee children's full attention.) *"She is a little bit afraid of meeting new people. Has that ever happened to you?"* (Allow lots of time for children to respond.) *"Now, what do you think we could do to help Carla know that we want to be her friend?"* Again, allow children to give you their ideas. Accept all answers. Ask, *"What else?"* to encourage a variety of solutions.

Now it is time to actually bring Carla out. You might have her peek out from your lap and then hide her face again as you encourage her with your words: *"It's OK, Carla; these are friendly boys and girls. Remember, boys and girls, we said Carla might be afraid of loud voices so we'll have to be very quiet for Carla. See, Carla, the boys and girls are smiling for you."*

You can add techniques like having the puppet whisper in your ear if she is afraid to talk to the boys and girls or the puppet can talk directly to children. Over a period of time, the puppet can come to the circle for help in solving many different kinds of problems. For instance, Carla can tell you that she wanted to play with her friend Maranda but Maranda was playing with someone else. Let children brainstorm ideas for Carla about what to do in that situation. As needs arise in your classroom, you can introduce other puppets with new problems and even have them interact with each other during circle time.

It is best to keep these puppets in a special place and make bringing them to circle time a special event. I find this keeps children's interest longer and helps to maintain each puppet's special mystique.

To fully reap the benefits of this problem-solving technique, you will need to refer to the puppets as problems arise during the day. When children are arguing over a toy, you can step in and remind them about the ideas that the puppets have tried in the same situation.

Encourage children to try these ideas themselves. When it is the puppet's ideas and not just the teacher's suggestions, children are often more willing to try out new strategies. Don't forget to remind them that they helped the puppet solve a similar problem at circle time.

CIRCLES AT CIRCLE TIME

by Karen Leigh-Spicer

Children usually master the task of distinguishing between circles, squares, and triangles quickly. Learning the difference between shapes that are similar to one another such as ovals, pears, oblongs, and circles, can take more time.

A fun way to master the differences between these similar shapes is searching for circle clues. Children become circle detectives. This is a great activity to start at circle time. After a discussion and visual examples of these similar shapes each child is armed with a magnifying glass and sent looking for circles in the classroom. Children can work together in teams of two or on their own. Magnifying glasses are made of plastic lid rims (*Cool Whip* size) glued to popsicle sticks or tongue depressors. When a child finds a circle, she reports the discovery to the chief inspector (teacher) who records the find on the chalkboard or poster paper. After the search has been conducted, young learners and their teacher discuss which items listed are circles. For example, a car tire is a circle, but an eye is not. What shape is an eye? Are there other items on the list that are shaped more like the eye than a circle? What shape is a young learner's head? How many circles did students find? Can they find any more? What was the largest circle found? The smallest? Can children find objects made of more than one circle? After they have discovered easier circles (tires, buttons, coins) have children look for less obvious circles (the bottom of a drinking glass or the top of a pencil eraser). Can young learners find objects made of a combination of circles and other similar shapes? This shows children how they can combine shapes to make different objects.

Children can also take their magnifying glasses home to search for circle clues. With the help of a parent, have children make a list of the circles they find. You can either have them find a specific number of circles or a limitless number. Again discuss the items on the list. Did young learners find similar circles? Were there any unusual circles? Were any circles combined with other shapes to create an object? What were the other shapes? If an item listed is not a circle, what shape is it? Young learners can bring in one example of a circle they found from home to share with other classmates.

This activity is great when you have extra time between lessons. This approach gives children hands-on experience with shapes. They can visually test what they see. As children search for circle clues, they learn to distinguish between similar shapes as well as see how shape combinations create objects.

SURVEY YOUR CIRCLE

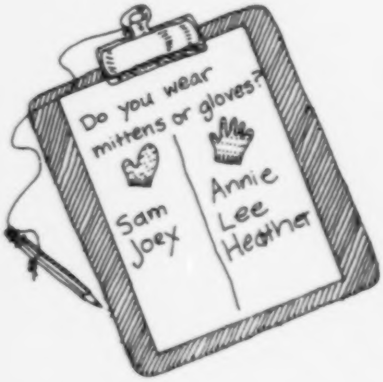
by Leanne D. Grace

Circle time is a time of learning about each other and building the classroom community. One activity we have used successfully to learn more about each other has been "surveys."

Once a week, a survey question is formally posed to children. The "survey" consists of a written question attached to a clipboard with a pencil or pen on a string. Children respond to the questions by "writing" their name under a choice column. Learning to write their name becomes a meaningful and purposeful activity, as opposed to a rote drill. We have observed children able to independently write their own name, help others write their name, search for names in print in the classroom to copy as well as write names for each other.

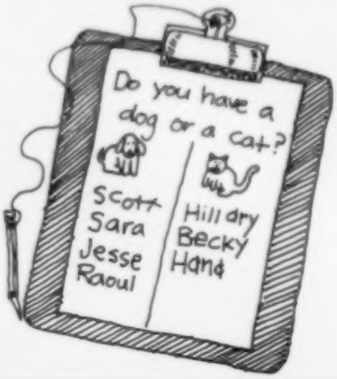
It is important to keep answer choices simple; rebus (picture) cues can accompany them. We have found stickers, stampers, and simple drawings work well. Typical "survey" questions can have two choice answers, such as *Yes* or *No* (children quickly learn to read these words). Or questions might be framed in this way:

- Do you have a dog or a cat?
- Do you have a brother or sister?
- Do you like to eat eggs scrambled or hard boiled?
- Do you wear mittens or gloves?
- Snack choices COOKIES or CRACKERS?


Do you wear mittens or gloves?
Sam
Joey
Annie
Lee
Heather

More elaborate questioning techniques can add more choice columns:

- Does your jacket zip, button, or snap?
- Is your favorite color red, blue, or purple? (words can be written in color.)
- How many buttons do you have on: 0, 1, 2, 3, more?



- Are your eyes blue, brown, or green? (You can watch children looking carefully at one another for this one.)

The survey is introduced in circle time one day and circulates during choice/freeplay time via the leader of the day, another interested child, or an adult.

The next circle time then becomes the time to analyze the results, always prefaced by asking children to predict what they think the results may be. Names in each column can be counted (one-to-one correspondence) and the numeral written to represent the number. Numbers can be compared for more, less, or the same. Did children think that would be the result? Some results will dictate further consequences such as the snack choice for the day, color of paint to use, or a game or song to be sung.

We brainstorm survey questions to correspond with letter, theme, or number study and jot them down in plan books. Children begin to look forward to the survey question and having a turn at being in charge. It isn't long before they have ideas for survey questions. My favorite question initiated by a child—*"Do you have a billy goat?" "Yes or no?"* Of course, she was the only *Yes*.

CIRCLE TIME WITHOUT WORDS

by Carole Schoneman

Even when we use words, our bodies speak louder. *"Are you OK?"* is given real meaning by our body language.

Children with speech and language problems respond to "hands on" language. The following circle time activity allows children with developing language skills and articulation problems to participate on equal terms with their verbal classmates. It allows them to take part in circle time with confidence and enthusiasm.

After this activity, it is good to review, *"Look at me,"* and *"I am listening,"* for daily carry over at story time.

Prepare children before they come to the circle by saying, *"We are going to talk without using our voices."* Give examples, such as:

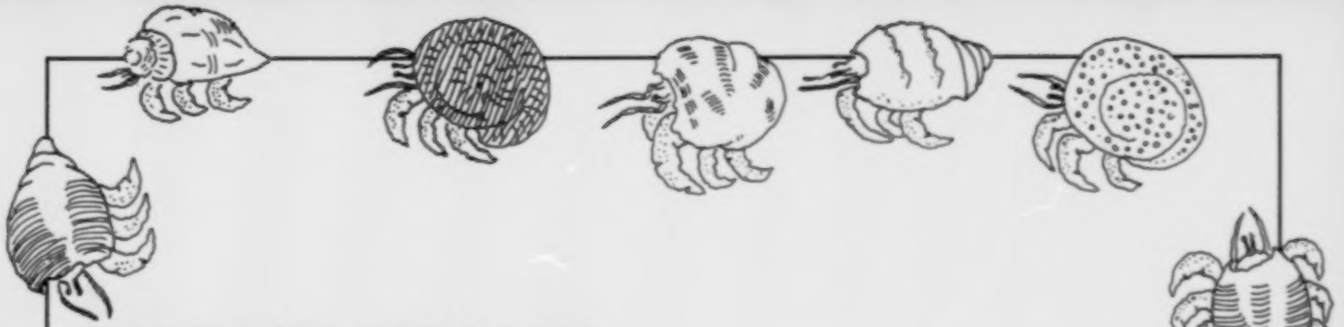
- *"Hi!"* From across the room smile and wave at children.
- *"Come over here."* Mime with hand and lower arm gesturing toward your body.
- *"Hurry!"* Add an air of urgency to your expression. Beckon rapidly.
- *"You may sit here."* Smile broadly. Touch the chair and graciously indicate for a child to sit there. Help each child to be seated if you can.
- If somebody slips or falls, be ready with, *"I'm sorry. Are you all right?"* Look concerned, reach forward, hug the child, pat his back.

When children are seated around you, include them in the action by asking: *"How can we say, 'That's good'?"* They may suggest in pantomime: thumbs up; high five; nod in affirmation. Use few words to guide them or to call attention to individual responses. Here are some suggestions.

"How can we say, 'Yes'?" (Nod in affirmation. Smile.)

- *"How can we say, 'No'?"* (Thumbs down. Frown. Negative head shake.)
- *"How can we say, 'Here. I want you to have this.'"* (Pantomime giving something.)
- *"How many?"* (Indicate with fingers.)
- *"Look at me."* (Point to self.)
- *"I can't hear you."* (Lean forward. Look concerned. Cup your hand behind your ear.)
- *"I mean it!"* (Shake index finger and look stern.)
- *"I like you."* (Smile. Hug each other.)
- *"I'm sleepy."* (Yawn. Rub your eyes. Fold hands beside your head.)
- *"I'm sad."* (Look down. No smile.)
- *"I'm listening."* (Sit up. Make eye contact with the speaker. Fold hands in lap.)
- *"It's time to go to the next activity."* (Indicate happy anticipation in your facial expression. Tap your watch.)
- *"Quietly."* (Finger to lips. Tiptoe.)
- *"Good-bye."* (Wave as children leave the circle.)

Lead short, wordless circle times often until children get the hang of it. Then children can try to be leaders.



SCIENCE CIRCLES

by Susan Mills

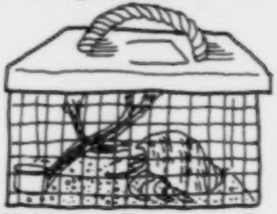
Banish the winter blahs with scientific explorations at circle time. The whole group experience offers children an opportunity to experience new or unusual things in a safe and comfortable setting.

The inquiry method of teaching is a relatively simple technique of asking specific questions to bring out responses from children. You will be amazed at how carefully constructed questions can help children observe the world with a critical eye for details and help them gain a better understanding of nature.

It is not necessary for you to be an expert and know all the answers to use this technique. Knowing the name of a particular leaf, rock, or shell is not as important as being able to describe it. The names *box elder, quartz,* or *mussel* may not be remembered by children, but they will remember the specific qualities of each item.

A HERMIT CRAB VISITOR

Here are some examples of how to guide an inquiry science experience. Let's say that a child has brought in a hermit crab to share with the class. Before circle time, give children a chance to view the crab on their own. At circle time, ask questions to get them remembering what they noticed about the hermit crab. *"What does it look like?" "How many legs does it have?" "Have you ever seen a similar animal?" "Is it easy to see? Why or why not?" "How does its color help it (to be seen or to hide)?" "How big is it?" "What does it smell like?" "What does it feel like?" "Do hermit crabs live around here?" "Where does this crab live?" "What does it eat?" "How do you know that?"* Help children to describe the crab in their own words. Then push children's imaginations further by asking: *"Can you play with the crab?" "Is it shy?" "Why does it make a good pet?" "What would be fun about being like a hermit crab?" "What wouldn't be fun about being one?"*



Children will suggest all kinds of answers to your questions so encourage them to be creative in their responses. If a particular answer seems unusual, ask the child for more information. This technique helps us to "see" into the way a child thinks or reasons.

WATER AND ICE

Let's explore water and ice during circle time. Discuss changing weather patterns, and try some experiments with children. Freeze water in several plastic containers. Take the containers out of the freezer for about ten minutes before the group gathers, so the ice can begin to melt. Share the mini-icebergs and then ask questions: *"What is it called?" "Where does it come from?" "What causes it to freeze?"* Invite children to touch it, watch it melt. *"What is it made of?" "What color is it?" "How does it become this shape?"*

Compare water and ice, list children's descriptions on a chart tablet to make into poems later. Refreeze the water. Add food coloring to the water. Put containers outside your classroom and see if the water freezes overnight.

The hardest thing to do is to get used to saying, *"I don't know, but we can look it up!"* There is so much to see and learn that it is impossible for parents and teachers to know the answers to everything. Don't skip asking a question because you're not sure of the answer. The answer doesn't always matter as much as the process of getting to it.

SENSORY CIRCLES

by Tania Cowling

Think about sight, taste, hearing, smell, and touch. We depend on them every day. Our senses provide so much enjoyment as we see beautiful things, taste delicious foods, smell fragrant flowers, hear wonderful music, and touch sensuous textures.

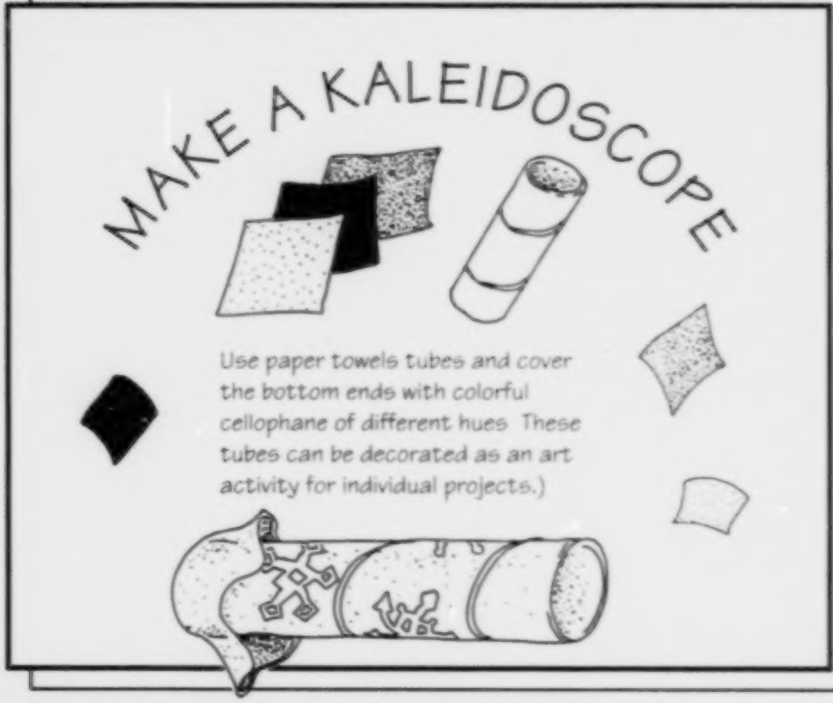
Try some of these circle time activities, just waiting to enlighten the five senses.

SIGHT

Kaleidoscope Make kaleidoscopes and let children see the world through many colors. Pass these around the circle and let each child view the classroom or outdoors in a variety of colors.

An old game of "I Spy" can be played using these kaleidoscopes as mini-telescopes. Make up riddles with your children to guess an object. For example, "I spy a blue flat surface with four legs attached." (Answer – the blue table in the corner of the room.)

What's Missing? Display a variety of objects on a tray. Let children view the tray for a short time. Cover it with a cloth, removing at least one object. Remove the cloth and ask, *"What's Missing?"* If children are older or more advanced, try removing more than one object at a time.



Use paper towels tubes and cover the bottom ends with colorful cellophane of different hues. These tubes can be decorated as an art activity for individual projects.)

Eye Pictures Draw a beautiful pair of eyes on a sheet of paper. Photocopy the sheet and give one to each child. Have children draw a face surrounding the eyes; their own or those of a favorite person.

TASTE

My Favorite Taste Ask the parents to send in their child's favorite snack (enough for the entire group to taste). Have children sit in a circle with their eyes closed. Let them put a small amount in their mouths. Can they guess what food it is? Describe the taste; sweet, salty, or sour?

Taste Graph Try an apple tasting test. Bring in various sources of apples; raw apples, apple sauce, apple jelly, apple juice, and dried apples. Graph a large chart with the product, as well as a box with each child's name. Ask children to taste the food and then to fill in a happy face or a Mr. Yuk face for their likes and dislikes.

SMELL

Does Your Nose Know? Bring in several containers to school, each containing a separate substance. Such

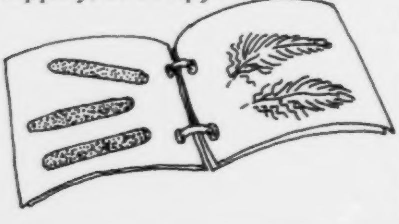
examples are onions, garlic, lemon juice, peanut butter, popped popcorn, oranges, and so on. Make sure each container is covered with a paper towel. Let children smell each cup. Can they guess what's inside by using their nose?

Does Everything Have A Smell? Talk about different objects in the classroom. What else smells in the classroom? Let children sniff crayons, paints, toys, clay, etc. What about smoke and fire—does it smell dangerous? Also, how does it smell before a rain storm? Fresh, I hope!

TOUCH

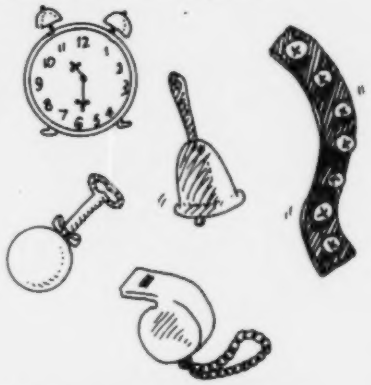
Toe Touch Have children sit in a circle with bare feet. Provide feathers, cotton balls, pine needles, sandpaper, velvet, etc. Pass these around the circle letting each child touch their feet with the objects. How do they feel? Do any items tickle?

Texture Booklet It's fun to make individual booklets and glue on textured items. Discuss the concepts of smooth, rough, slippery, or bumpy.



HEARING

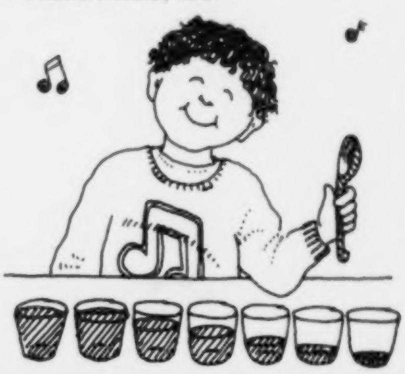
Listen And Tell Bring objects that make sounds to circle time. Examples are an alarm clock, bell, horn, baby rattle, etc. First, show the children the object and let them hear the sounds. Now, turn your back and make one of the sounds. Can your students guess what each object is?



Recording Sounds Talk about sounds made in your town; animals, vehicles, and machines. Can the students imitate these sounds. Have fun with a tape recorder, logging children's sounds. Play it back for "guess and giggle" fun.

Musical Sounds Bring out the musical rhythm instruments for classroom circle time fun. Encourage children to play the various sets of rhythm sticks, maracas, tambourines, drums, etc. Discuss the opposite concepts of loud/soft and fast/slow.

Water glasses provide a great musical as well as science experience. Fill seven glasses (the same kind) progressively with larger amounts of water. Keep them in order on a table from the least amount of water to the largest. Let children play sounds and tones by tapping lightly with a metal spoon. Try to play a simple song. Let children try to make music, too.



VISITORS IN THE CIRCLE

by Karen Stephens

Looking for a way to add variety to your circle time? Invite a special visitor to your classroom! Special visitors may come from familiar or unexpected places. This article will spark some ideas for you!

CHOOSING A VISITOR

There are a number of ways to guide your decision-making process when selecting a special visitor.

▲ Match a visitor to your current unit theme. Are you studying community helpers? Invite any of the following: fire fighter, police officer, conservationist, zoo keeper, botanist, scout leader, jeweler, veterinarian, nurse, doctor, garbage collector, ferry driver, subway driver, railroad worker, orchestra conductor, and so on.

▲ Capitalize on a parent's individual skill or talent. This is a great way to include parent involvement in your curriculum! Parents may illustrate a number of talents such as weaving, painting, clay work, woodworking skills, musical talent, or cooking skills.

▲ Bring the generations together. Find a grandparent, great grandparent, or foster grandparent, if necessary, and ask her to share games from her childhood. Perhaps she can bring in a photo album of her childhood to share with children.

▲ Take advantage of an unplanned "teachable moment." For instance, has an owl nested outside your play yard? Call a park official or biology professor to speak with your class.

▲ Introduce something novel just for the fun of it! Can a friend "play the spoons?" Invite a juggler. What classroom items can the children find for the juggler to use to show his skill? Invite a clown to come in to prepare her make up in front of the children! The transformation is fascinating!

▲ Select a visitor to follow up a field trip. Visit the art museum and then invite an artist to demonstrate the process of creation! Visit the library. Find a local author or illustrator to tell children how a book is written or created.

PREPARING THE VISITOR

Be sure your special visitor understands the ages and abilities of children in your class. Tell him the typical attention span. This will help him gauge the length of the experience. Give the special visitor tips on keeping children's interest, for instance, bring in "touchable" props, have large pictures, appeal to the senses, ideas for including active participation, etc. Give guidance on stating information clearly and simply to match children's level of understanding. Remember, special visitors want to have a satisfying and successful experience. Helping them give a developmentally appropriate experience will ensure their return visit!

Be sure to send a confirmation note and include clear directions to your program. If parking is a problem, include a pass or suggestions for easy parking.

PREPARING CHILDREN

Let children know they will have a special visitor. Talk about the visitor's title or talent. Ask children to tell you what they know about the visitor's topic before the visit takes place.

Let children know what to expect. For instance, if you invite a visually disabled person to bring in her seeing eye dog, be sure to alert children. Explain why the dog is needed and why the dog is coming. Explain appropriate ways to interact with the dog (if allowed by the special visitor).

Give children clear directions on expected behavior. By role modeling, teach them how to show respect and convey politeness. Let children know what types of questions they might ask the special visitor. Provide necessary safety warnings, i.e.

being cautious around visitors' tools, art samples, animals, etc.

Before the visit, be sure to use a calming transition technique to gather children in the circle time area. Have staff sit with the children to help direct, or redirect, their attention when necessary.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

▲ Write thank you notes. Send copies of photographs that might have been taken. Let children draw pictures to accompany notes.

▲ Create a dramatic play center to correspond to the special visitor topic, i.e. post office, art museum or artist's studio, jewelry store, grocery store, hair stylist studio, fire station, hospital nursery, veterinarian's hospital, etc.

▲ Take a field trip to the special visitor's home, studio, or work place.

▲ Watch an educational video on the special visitor's topic.

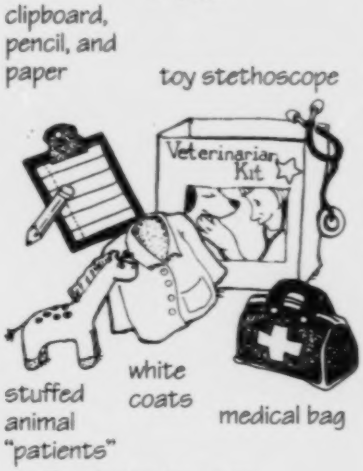
▲ Visit the library and check out children's books on the special visitor's topic.

▲ Create a bulletin board or a window or table display related to the special visitor's topic.

▲ Include in your parent newsletter information on the special visitor. Encourage families to extend their children's learning at home.

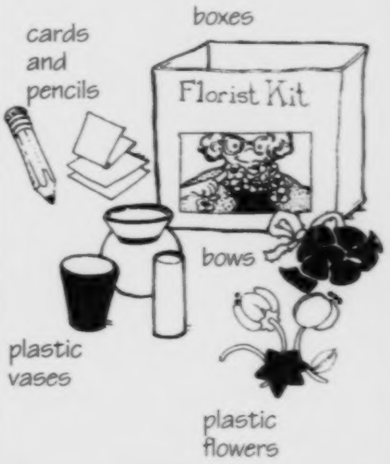
DRAMATIC PLAY KITS

Veterinarian Kit

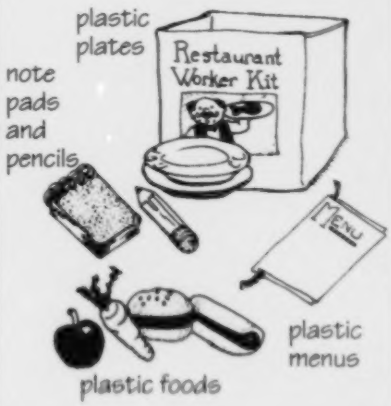

clipboard, pencil, and paper
toy stethoscope
Veterinarian Kit
stuffed animal "patients"
white coats
medical bag

For doctor kit—use baby dolls as patients

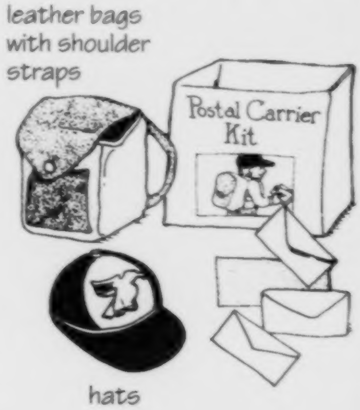
Florist Kit


cards and pencils
boxes
Florist Kit
bows
plastic vases
plastic flowers

Restaurant Worker Kit


plastic plates
note pads and pencils
Restaurant Worker Kit
Menu
plastic menus
plastic foods

Postal Carrier Kit


leather bags with shoulder straps
Postal Carrier Kit
hats

* Adapted from *Block Adventures* by Karen Stephens (First Teacher Press)

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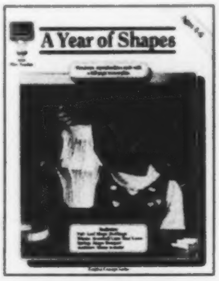

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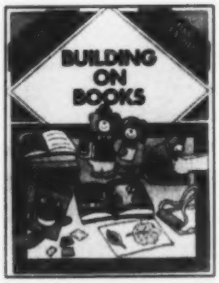

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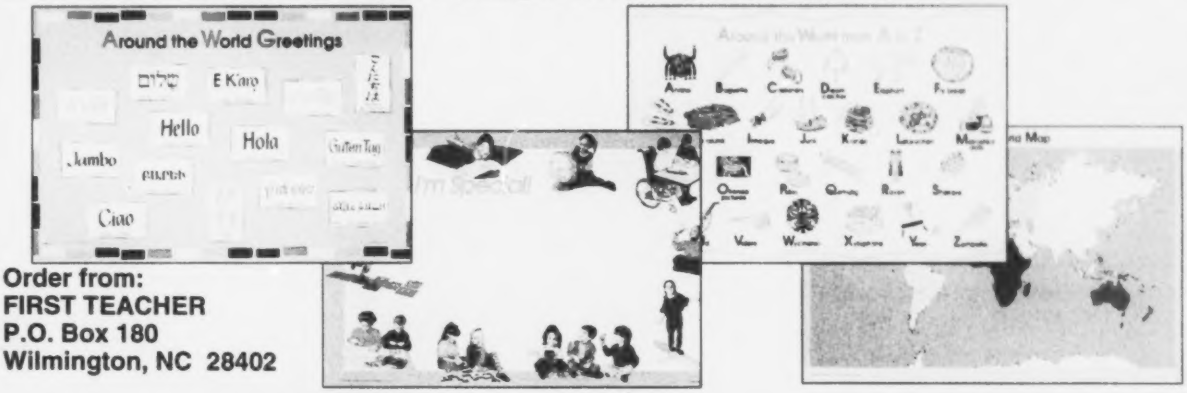

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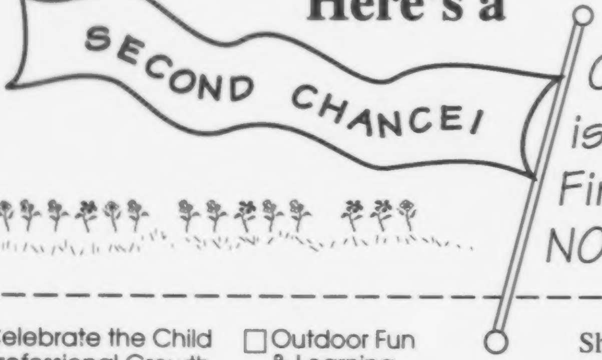
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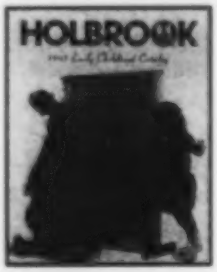

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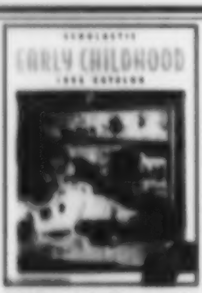

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- Celebrate the Moon
- Decorate your Classroom Ceiling
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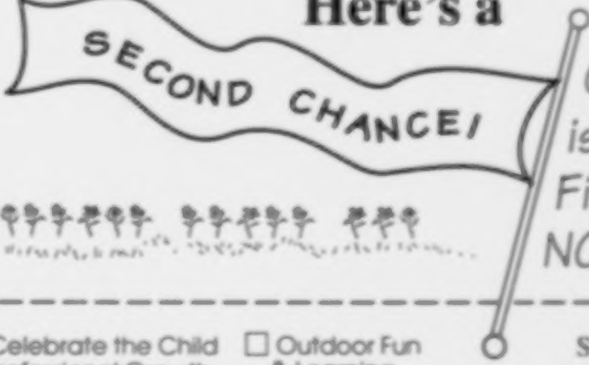
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CONTENTS

FEATURES:

Look Up...at the Ceiling 6
The Sun in the Morning 10
A Letter to Parents 11
The Big Dipper and Beyond 12
Celebrate the Moon 14
Explore Space—on your Computer 15
Ice Cream Castles in the Sky 16
Moving—Up, Up, and Away 17
Rainbows—a Celebration of Color 22
Six Ways to Make a Rainbow 23
Experiment with Weather 24
Fine-Feathered Friends 30
It's a Bird! 31
It's a Plane! 32
It's Super Bugs! 34

DEPARTMENTS:

HELPFUL HINTS: Look Up and Learn 5
TODDLER TIME: Time to Play and Time to Sleep 8
RAINY DAY FUN: Raining Frogs and Toads 19

IN THE BOOK CORNER:

What Do You See Up There? 26
Day & Night; Balloons & Birds 27
The World Above Our Heads 28

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

by Lisa Lyons Durkin

What's up this spring? Lots of wonderful, fascinating things—especially for young children! When a young child looks up, she discovers a whole new world—the trees, the sky, adult heads, and maybe even the family dog! The ideas and activities in this issue of *First Teacher* help children make exciting discoveries—as they look at life from a new perspective.

What's so special about a ceiling? Gail Jones gives you a year's worth of ideas to make your classroom ceiling something really special. From baskets of eggs and bunny mobiles for April to flags and pennants in June to winter trolls, looking up will always be fun.

When we look up, we can tell whether it is day or night. Toddlers can begin to explore these concepts with ideas from Jeannine Perez. Pre-schoolers will make additional discoveries through the activities in the article, "The Sun in the Morning...". There are several articles full of activities that explore the nighttime sky from a celebration of the moon through African folktales to a space voyage on the computer. There is also a reproducible letter that we hope you will share with parents about taking their children on a nighttime walk.

There's plenty to see in the sky during the day. Karen Stephens describes experiments on weather you can do with young children. Clouds lend themselves to many activities throughout the curriculum in Barbara Fischer's article.

Because April showers are often expected when we look up at this time of year, the centerfold brings a myriad of ideas for fun and learning on a rainy day. Whether it's raining "cats and dogs" or "frogs and toads" as they say in the Southwest, your children will gain a new interest in and appreciation for those gray, wet days through activities in art, language, music, movement, science, and cooking. Of course we always hope to see a rainbow at the end of a rain. Even if there isn't one in the sky, you will learn how to create colorful displays right in your classroom in this issue, as well as a recipe for colorful rainbow sandwiches.

Any child will tell you that one of the most interesting reasons to look up is to see "things that fly." In this issue, there are articles on birds, planes, and bugs, each one weaving these themes through all areas of your classroom.

What's up this spring? *First Teacher*, of course!

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

✏ **Susan Entz**, author of "It's Super Bugs" in this issue, is publishing "Flying Friends" a puppet program including a glove with a garden on it, five sets of finger puppets—birds, bees, ladybugs, and butterflies—and a complete teacher's guide. Susan also teaches Early Childhood Education at the University of Hawaii and works with her state on providing director support for staff training in child care centers.

✏ **Susan Peterson** is currently Assisitant Director of the Center for Academic Excellence at the University of Central Arkansas in Conway, Arkansas. She is a former classroom teacher.

✏ **Susan Mills** is an educator with the Virginia Museum of Natural History in Charlottesville, Virginia. She teaches a summer program, "Nature on the Playground," for urban youngsters. An early childhood educator for more than 15 years, Susan is also a freelance author. She has two children, Benjamin and Jennifer.

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HELPFUL HINTS

LOOK UP AND LEARN

by Gail P. Jones

1. Whether you teach infants or adults, going outside and looking up is a never-ending educational experience! (And, it also works great for calming down a rambunctious group of four year olds!) It's always available, day or night; it's never the same as it was the last time you looked (and/or listened); and, you can be sure it will keep on changing!

2. Look for daily signs and changes of weather, seasons, and time. If you have children arriving early in the morning, take them outside and see if they can see the moon, stars, and sun at the same time.

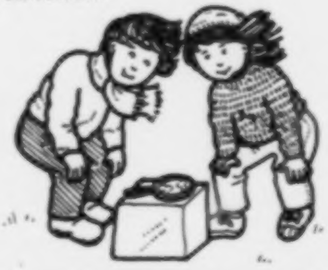
3. Let children use all of their senses in learning about "what's up." Let them run with their backs and faces to the wind; let them taste the raindrops and smell the air after a shower.

4. Naturally, you don't want children to look directly at the sun, so you may want to use some of the following ideas:

▲ Fill a large, dark, flat pan with water and look only at the reflection of the sun and clouds. If it is a clear day, this will also bother children's eyes, so let them look up at the sky through an opaque material such as cheesecloth.

▲ Use a "peephole" in a piece of paper to look at the clouds and reflection of the sun. (When the sun is setting or rising, children can probably look directly at it without a problem.)

▲ Watch the clouds roll by overhead (and anything else that might be in their line of vision!) by placing a mirror on top of a carton bottom and watching in that. Determine the direction from which the clouds are blowing to find out the wind direction.



5. Look for all the animals and insects that can be seen in the sky. Perhaps children could create a sky mural near the classroom ceiling to record their "discoveries" each month and season! Look for the geese flying in "V" formation, the butterflies and birds of spring, the leaves blowing in fall, and the snowflakes of winter.

6. Let children discover which things are natural and which are man-made when they look up. Help them understand the similarities and differences by making some things of their own. Does the butterfly they made fly like the real one? Does their helicopter stay up? Is the helicopter like the butterfly?

7. Let children brainstorm what they see when they look up and use the ideas for projects.

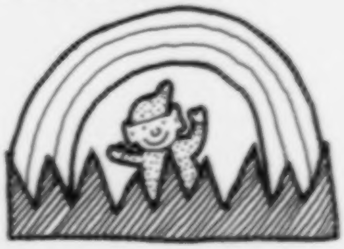
LOOK UP...AT THE CEILING

by Gail P. Jones

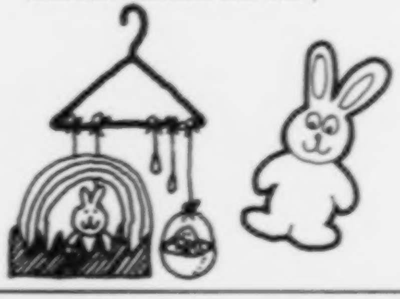
"Looking Up" in the classroom is often more depressing than exciting...Especially if you're blessed with a less-than-attractive ceiling! But, with a little forethought, some basic art supplies, and a lot of child participation, you can change your ceiling with every season, month, or unit! Let children make the overheads over the spot where they nap. (If your children don't nap at school, give them their own special space to use for large motor activities, etc.) By giving them their own "space," they not only feel special and more secure, they also have a place for artwork, hanging stories, notes for home, and reminders. Substitutes will love having the overheads because it makes finding nap spots much easier while putting out cots or mats. Matching the number on the mat to the number on the ceiling also helps them learn the names of your children. If you don't have ceiling tile grids for hanging, perhaps you can string clotheslines across or use large picture hanging hooks.

Be sure to coordinate the overheads each month with your units and themes. Here are some ideas from one classroom for a year of overhead magic—some of which can be reused year after year.

▶ In **March**, children cut out a large piece of green "grass." On one side they printed their own names and numbers. They made a cute little leprechaun to hide in the grass and peek over the top. Another day, they made a rainbow out of the materials of their choice and attached it to the top of the grass and leprechaun. A kite made during another art session hung blowing nearby.



▶ For **April,** the rainbow stayed up, but children replaced the leprechaun with a bunny and a basket of eggs. A basket can be made from a paper bowl with pipe cleaner handle. Raindrops might be added, as well as a sun and a cloud for April showers. (Coat hangers work well if children mobiles like this.)



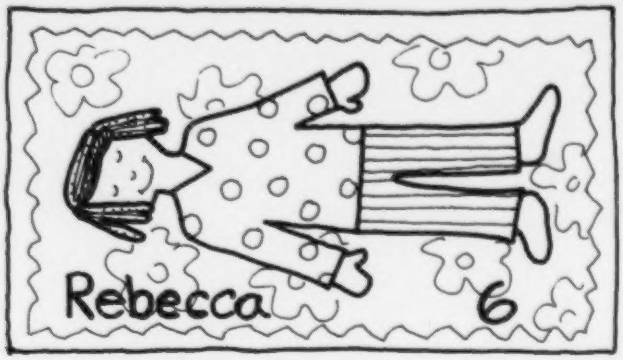
▶ At the end of April, children replaced the eggs in the basket with **May** flowers. The rainbows and bunnies were taken down also. Poems or stories about "Mommy" might be added near Mother's Day and a flag might go up near Memorial Day. The unit for May was dinosaurs, so children made pterodactyls for their overheads after Mother's Day.

▶ If you use flags for Memorial day, leave them up for Flag Day in **June.** The unit for June was sports and sportsmanship, so children made name pennants and decorated them as they wished.

▶ The flags can also stay up in **July** for Independence Day. The July unit was camping so children made birds and three-dimensional trees overhead to create a camping environment.

▶ A nightime star picture might have a cooling effect for the month of **August.** The unit was islands and the beach so children made seagulls and palm tree leaves. The fish in each bird's mouth had a name and number on it.

▶ **September** brought a new group of children, learning school routines, and about themselves. So, we gave each child the outline of a sleeping child on a mat with their name and mat number printed clearly

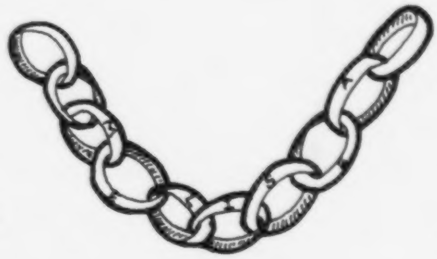


on one side. It took several art sessions for children to complete the overhead. One day consisted of choosing the right skin color and yarn for hair. Another time was used for gluing fabric swatches or yarn on the mats or coloring them to match the colors in their blankets.

▶ When **October** rolled around, children cut out a large, yellow circle for a moon and attached it to the top of the sleeping child on the mat. The moons were decorated by "thumping" the eraser end of a pencil with black paint on it to fill the inside of a witch stencil. With an older group, have each child stand in his special spot and throw a ball of black yarn while calling out each other's name. By attaching the yarn to children's overhead name hooks, we created a giant ceiling spider web. To the web, children added spider and bat crafts!

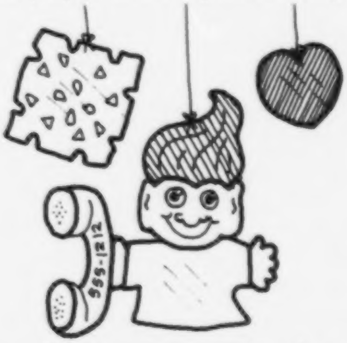
▶ When **November** comes, our unit changed to nutrition and Thanksgiving. The Halloween decorations came down but the sleeping child remained. A dream cloud was attached to the top of the overhead. Children cut out magazine pictures of their favorite foods and glued them onto the cloud.

▶ **December** was a month for learning about families and their celebrations. The sleeping child remained and the cloud was changed to pictures of sugar plums or holiday wishes. We let children make a colored chain with the colors of their favorite holiday and to put their letters of their names on each link. Those celebrating Christmas might use red and green; Hanukkah was blue and white; while Kwanzaa was red, black, and green. Some children chose to celebrate winter with white and another color of their choice like gold. Crafts for all the holidays interspersed the chains and created a very festive ceiling!



▶ In **January,** we used teacher-made, laminated, Troll-like faces wearing hats, mittens, and jackets (large upper half bodies only). By laminating them beforehand and adding names and numbers, they can be reused year after year. Some children printed their own names and numbers; others traced them. If you wish to use permanent marker, it will come off with nail polish remover or hair spray. The color of the jackets, mittens and hats can be left uncolored so children can match them to their own with markers. This comes in handy when a stray mitten is found! Children also added a big white snowflake to the back of the child.

▶ In **February,** the same Troll remained up and children added a red heart to the snowflake. A laminated country mailbox was attached to the hands of each with the child's address printed on it since the unit was communication. Phone numbers could be written on a phone in each child's hand also. (Make sure no unlisted numbers are publicly displayed without permission.)



Whatever your units, choose appropriate overheads and children will have a fun way to learn, express themselves, feel good about having their work displayed, and feel secure in their own special spot! Things are "looking up"!

TODDLER TIME

TIME TO PLAY AND TIME TO SLEEP

by Jeannine Perez

Piaget theorized that preschool children cannot think abstractly and that they understand only what they can see, hear, touch, taste, or smell. Time is an abstract concept that has little meaning for infants and toddlers except for the natural cycles of hunger and sleep.

But the toddlers in your class will begin to understand the sequence and cycle of each day when you use short group times to act out the day's activities with them. Here are some ideas.

- This activity could become a part of your beginning circle time. Say, "*When you wake up, what do you do first?*" "*What happens next?*" "*When you come to school, what happens first?*'
- Point out clocks and activities that help us measure time. Use a pizza or other large cardboard circle to make a "day clock" that shows divisions in each day's schedule.

Help children draw activities that commonly occur at certain times of the day (keep the segments broad and basic, and don't make too many divisions). Draw and cut out clock hands, and fasten them to the center of your day clock with brass fasteners. Appoint a child each day to move the hands to the appropriate activities, or make that a part of transitions. ("*Now it is time for lunch. Kim, will you move the hands to show that it is lunchtime?*")

- Or simply divide the cardboard circle in half, making one half black and the other half white or blue. Help children decorate each half with cut outs of activities happening at that time.
- Create a bulletin board, covering half the board with dark paper, and the other half with white or blue paper. Help children decorate each side, adding, sun, flowers, birds, and children to the day side, and moon, stars, and dark silhouettes to the night side.
- Set up two sides of the room to represent day and night. Set up one half with daytime activities: full of sunlight, plants, toys, books, and a table to snack. Decorate the other half as nighttime. In this half, include cots, "glow-in-the-dark" pictures, cuddly toys, and soft music.
- Use fingerplays and role playing to expand the concept. Let children pretend to be animals sleeping. (Also talk about animals that are active at night.)
- Add actions to poems and fingerplays. When we act out the poem below, all but one child stands in a circle that represents day and night. We give that child a large yellow/gold sun circle; the child moves around the circle of children. (Let children take turns being the sun.)

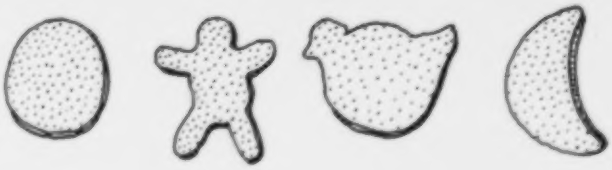
Over there, the sun comes up,
marches all the day.
At noon it stands right overhead,
at night it goes away.
Wake up, wake up! The sun wakes up,
and travels all day long.
At noon, I see it overhead,
at night, stars sing their song. (Unknown)

- Sing night and day songs. Some good examples are "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star," "Ten in the Bed," and "Mr. Sun."
- Read books about day and night to your toddlers such as:
  - *The Sun's Day* by Mordicai Gerstein (Harper and Row)
  - *Good Morning* by Stewart Beach (Scroll Press Inc.)
  - *Goodnight Moon* by Margaret Wise Brown (Harper and Row)
  - *Ten In Bed* by Mary Ress (Houghton Mifflin)

PARENT/CHILD SLEEP OVER

Our most successful parent activity was a sleep-in and pancake breakfast. To have a sleepover with parents requires lots of planning. Know that it may be one of first occasions for some young toddlers to sleep away from home. Ask for sleeping bags and special cuddly toys. If weather permits, take a night walk with families and talk about the differences in what they see, hear, and smell during the night. It's also a good time to talk about night sounds that might be scary until understood.

- Play soft music and lullabies and tell bedtime stories with parents participating. Make up your own bedtime stories, or go around the circle asking parents to relate favorites.
- For breakfast, everyone, including teachers, must come in pjs. Read a book about pancakes such as *Pancakes, Pancakes* by Eric Carle (Picture Book Studio) or *Pancakes for Breakfast* by Tomie DePaola (Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich) Then make pancakes for breakfast. Make the batter from a mix, or better yet, let children help mix up the batter from scratch. Try the recipe for Puffy Pancakes, my mother's favorite.
- You can also have a slumber party in the middle of the day with bedtime stories and a "midnight" snack.



PUFFY PANCAKES

You'll Need: 2 cups flour ◆ 1 Tablespoon wheat germ ◆ 1/4 teaspoon salt ◆ 1 Tablespoon baking powder ◆ 1 1/2 teaspoon sugar ◆ 1/3 cup nonfat dry milk

What to Do:

1. Mix the dry ingredients together well.
2. Beat two eggs with a fork until frothy.
3. Stir in 1 1/2 cups cold water, but don't overmix. Add more liquid for a thinner batter.
4. Use a spoon to drop the batter onto the hot griddle in animal or children shapes. Serve with fruit or syrup (applesauce complements the pancakes).

NONFAT
DRY
MILK
FLOUR
S
Sugar
BAKING POWDER

THE SUN IN THE MORNING...

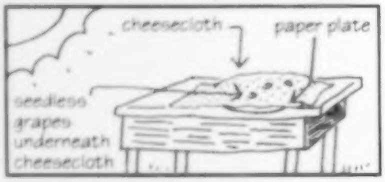
by Tania Cowling

We wake up in the morning ready to start a busy day. The sun is shining, people are going about their business, and children are playing. The sun provides the light for people to see and do all kinds of activities. After late afternoon, we use the term "dusk" as the day changes into night. Night falls and the moon and stars furnish some light.

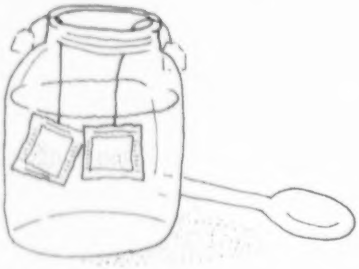
Encourage your children to discuss and chart both daytime and nighttime activities. Below are a few fun ideas to show the difference between sunshine and darkness.

☆ **Sun Snacks** It's a great learning experience for children to experiment with solar power. Snacks can be made using the sun.

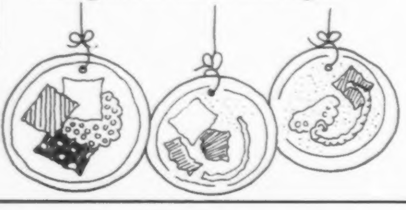
Place seedless grapes on a paper plate. Cover the entire top surface with cheesecloth. Place these in direct sunlight for at least four days. Grapes become raisins when they are pliable and leathery.



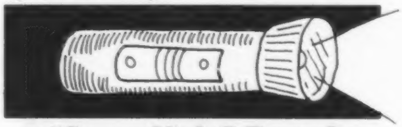
You can also make tea using the sun. Place two caffeine-free, herbal tea bags into a quart jar of water. As the jar sits in the sunlight, have children observe the changes in just a few hours.



☆ **Sun Catcher** Make these window ornaments in class to display in a sunny spot and later take home as keepsakes. You will need a plastic coffee or margarine lid for each child. Fill the entire inside surface with white tacky glue. Encourage children to place pieces of colorful tissue paper, doilies, glitter, even pieces of lace, yarn, and rickrack on the glue. Just before the glue is totally dry, gently remove the lid from the "sun catcher." Make a hole with a toothpick and thread a piece of yarn or dental floss for hanging. Hang up the finished pieces in a sunny window for further drying. When the glue is totally dry and transparent, the sunlight will shine through.



☆ **Explore the Dark** Find an area in or near the classroom that can be made fairly dark (not dark enough however to scare children). Give each child a flashlight. Turn the child's attention to the flashlights and start asking questions such as: *"Can you find a chair with your flashlight?"* Or *"Can you find Lisa's feet?"*

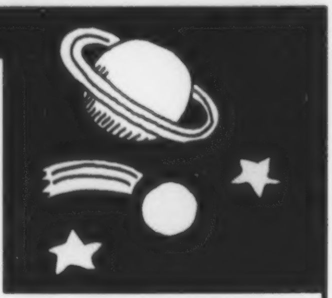


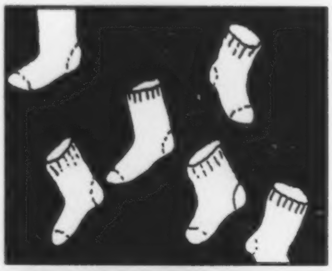
☆ **"Starry Night" Tent** On a large roll of paper, have children create a nighttime mural with the moon and lots of stars. Let children use aluminum foil to make luminous stars. Tape this mural onto the underside of a table. Next, drape sheets over the table. Dim the lights and encourage children to go inside the tent with a flashlight to view the night sky. This is a good time to discuss stars, the moon, and all the planets.

☆ **Day and Night Pictures** Give children a sheet of white paper and crayons to draw an outdoor scene. This is a daytime picture. This is a daytime picture. Now, have children paint over the same picture using a thin, black tempera wash. This will turn the picture from a daytime scene to a nighttime picture.

Dear Parents,

We have been discussing the stars, the sun, the planets, the moon, and comets. We would like you to show your child the night time skies. Here are some suggestions to help you plan your night time adventure.





Ideas by Kathy Faggella

☆ Talk about the absence of lights.

☆ Listen to the night time sounds of animals, birds, insects, and people.

☆ Observe night time creatures that might come out: bats, owls, raccoons, deer, etc.

☆ Locate the moon, some of the stars, and even a planet or two. (Planets are usually found slightly above the horizon in the very early evening or just before sunrise.)

☆ Sit down and watch for falling stars. These are really meteors that have entered our atmosphere.

☆ Watch how clouds sometimes cover the moon and stars.

☆ Pick out one familiar constellation and tell your child that it is a group of stars that has a specific name (The Big and Little Dipper are always easy to find.)

☆ Look at the stars and moon through a paper towel roll. (It is not a telescope or binoculars, yet you will be surprised how much more you can see.)

☆ Have your child notice how much more he can see after his eyes have adjusted to the darkness. Look for details on each others' faces. Try to read a newspaper in the dark. Try to read in the moonlight.

☆ Bring a bunch of colored socks outside into the moonlight. See if you can sort them by color in the dim light. Bring them inside for a good laugh. In such a pale light, we see things only as blacks and grays with very little or no coloring.

☆ Play a hearing game called "Creep On By." Give your child a flashlight and sit outside on the ground. Tell him to close his eyes. Play this game with a few people. Have the other players start in front of the child. Everyone tries to creep by the child without his hearing them. If he hears anyone, he lights the flashlight and points it into the direction of the sound. If the light touches the creeper, he must go back and start over again. The rest can continue to creep past the child. Take turns and let your child be a creeper too. (This game comes from the Smithsonian Family Learning Project Science Calendar for 1986.)

☆ Just enjoy this time outside at night with your child. Listen to what he has to say. Kids are just wonderful to take on adventures.

Sincerely,

Your Child's Teacher

THE BIG DIPPER AND BEYOND

by Cheryl Markovic

"Human beings are good at understanding the world. We always have been. We were able to hunt game or build fires only because we had figured something out. There was a time before television, before motion pictures, before radio, before books. The greatest part of human existence was spent in such a time. Over dying embers of the campfire, on a moonless night, we watched the sky." So writes Carl Sagan in his wonderful book *Cosmos*. Teachers are guides to opening the minds of our young students. We act as knowledge generalists to enable children to figure out their own world. We guide them in experiences of the natural world over and over and over so that the natural laws can be understood.

Experiencing the night sky with very young children is difficult for teachers. We just don't have children with us when we can stroll in the moonlight or gaze into the heavens to see the stars. But the night sky is a source of wonder for children and we can bring that wonder into our classrooms through the most powerful of learning tools, our imaginations.

One caution before you begin this star shape experience. Have a short discussion beforehand to be sure all the children know what stars in the night sky are. (In a discussion I was having with a three year old, I found out she knew the word, but her concept of stars was that they are decorations to make charts or fancy cards, she had to be reminded about the stars in the sky.) Be careful and orient children by talking about the night sky. Discuss the difference between the moon and the stars.

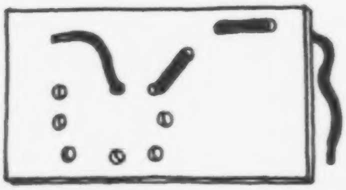
Start with a black felt board and seven white circles to represent stars, and tell star stories. To make the northern constellation called The Big Dipper, arrange three circles for the handle and four circles to form the dipper. To show why people thought this arrangement of stars looks like a dipper, take a piece of yarn and connect the "stars." This will give form to the "dipper." Explain to children how people used dippers to drink water from wells and water buckets. A long-handled pot is useful in demonstrating a dipper. A dipper was a simple, but important, tool for people long ago. That's why many people agreed that this group of seven stars formed a dipper.

Wonder at the night sky has inspired every age and culture, and the stars we call the Dipper have represented many things to many people. The Vikings called it a wagon traveling across the sky. Hindus in India saw it as seven wise men. For the Chinese it was a chariot to carry the emperor of the sky. In Great Britain it is still known as The Plough. And the ancient Greeks saw a great bear, a powerful image for a hunting society. As you discuss these shapes with children, move the length of yarn around the seven circles to illustrate how the different images looked to people long ago.

Now it is your children's turn. Ask them what shape they see. Write down their responses. Encourage them to move the circles and yarn around the felt board. Ask them what they see. Have them tell why they think the "stars" form the shape they imagine.

Turn out the lights, pull down the blinds, and create your own planetarium. Encourage seven children to lie on the floor and hand them flash lights. It will be hard for them to keep the lights shining in one spot to create shapes. Make it a game, and don't worry if they never form a dipper. What we want to encourage is a shape that children can think about. The star shape makers point the lights to the ceiling moving the lights around. One child, the star spotter, calls out, *"Shape!"* The star shape makers freeze their lights. The star spotter tells what shape she sees. Let children continue being star shape makers or star spotters so that everyone gets a turn—including the teacher!

Star Cards are fun and enhance the "star" experience. Punch out seven holes in 5" by 7" index cards. Have each child lace through the holes with yarn to connect the holes and create shapes. Write each child's name and a story of the shape on the cards. Make sure parents and guardians know about the star shape experiences the class has been doing. Encourage them to watch the night sky with their children. (See the letter on page 11.) Maybe they will make a discovery of their own!



Decorate your room with posters of the night sky, stars, and the moon. Book stores and nature stores are a great resource for pictures and posters.

A STORY OF THE BIG DIPPER

There once was a little girl who lived alone with her mother near a big woods. In the heat of the summer, the mother fell ill with a fever. There had been no rain for several weeks, and the drought had dried up all the wells. The little girl knew her mother needed water, so, even though night had fallen, she bravely set off into the woods to find a spring. She took with her only the old, tin dipper from their well and had nothing but the light of the moon to guide her way.

The girl had never gone into the woods by herself before. All the strange noises and shadows frightened her. To keep herself calm, she tried to explain each scary sound. *"Oh, that's not a ghost,"* she thought, *"It's just an owl looking for its dinner."* When she was really scared, she would look up at the night sky and make imaginary pictures out of the stars.

The girl walked for a long way without seeing so much as a puddle. Just as she was ready to give up, she noticed a grove of trees she had never seen before. Heading into the circle of towering oaks, the girl spied a large, sparkling spring. It was surrounded on all sides by beautiful flowers of every color and shape. Falling to her knees beside the spring, she excitedly filled the dipper with cold, clear water. Then, she turned to head home as fast as she dared, trying not to spill any of the water.

She had gotten about half way when she was scared by a strange noise. She relaxed when she saw in front of her a poor, panting dog. Feeling sorry for the animal, she poured out some of the water into her palm for it. The dog lapped it up eagerly and ran off, tail wagging. The girl continued on her way but soon stopped, startled and happy, when she realized the old, tin dipper has changed to silver so shiny it lit the path in front of her.

The girl had not made it much farther before she again heard a noise, this time soft and rasping. *"That's not an owl or a dog,"* she thought. Sure enough, around the next curve, was an old man sobbing in the road. *"I have travelled very far and am so thirsty I don't have the strength to go on,"* he told her. She bent down to offer him the dipper. Just one sip refreshed him and he jumped up exclaiming that she had saved his life. He hurried off on his journey and the girl too hurried home to her mother. The dipper glowed even brighter and, looking down, she saw it was no longer silver, but gold. With the help of the dipper's light, she was home in no time. She immediately had her mother drink every remaining drop of water from the golden dipper. Her mother was instantly well, just like the old man. She jumped out of bed to hug her daughter. As they danced around joyfully, a brilliant light filled the room. The radiance came from the dipper: it had changed from gold to seven bright diamonds! The dipper rose from the table and flew out the cottage window up into the night sky. The diamond dipper flew so high that all the little girl and her mother could see were seven points of light twinkling far above the earth.

Now, when you see the seven points of light, the dipper in the sky, think of the little girl and her brave, generous spirit.

CELEBRATE THE MOON

by Leanne D. Grace

Blast off! Celebrate the moon by immersing children in activities throughout the curriculum. Stories, folktales, and books are wonderful starting points.

Tell or read one or both of the following African folktales:

- *Why the Sun and the Moon Live in the Sky* by Elphinstone Dayrell (Scholastic)
- *Anasi the Spider* by Gerald McDermott (Henry Holt)

Each tale "explains" how the moon came to be in the sky. Both are Caldecott Honor Books and are sure to capture young children's attention.

Folktales offer wonderful opportunities for children to easily retell or act out the story. Few if any props are needed. Simple headbands, masks, or stick puppets could be used. The Anansi story particularly lends itself to spider headbands. Children can take on the roles of Anansi or one of his six sons. *Why the Sun and the Moon Live in the Sky* is illustrated with masks; so paper plate masks can easily be constructed by your children before they act out the story.

Using the globe, locate Africa (the source of our folktales) and talk about where it is in relation to where children live. These two folktales come from different parts of Africa. Anansi is a traditional folk character in West Africa, particularly in Ghana. The other tale comes from Nigeria. Show these places to children on the globe.

After celebrating these folktales, perhaps children can create their own tale of "How the Moon Came to Be in the Sky." Begin by asking children the following story starters:

- Where did the moon used to live?
- Who or what found or discovered the moon?
- What did they want to do with the moon?

Follow your children's lead and create your own class folktale. You may be surprised by their vivid imaginations. Perhaps the new story could be dramatized. Teachers could take dictation and children could illustrate their very own folktales also.

Don't forget to integrate other areas of the curriculum into your moon studies throughout the day.

- On the calendar, chart the phases of the moon. Encourage children to look at the moon each night and draw the shape they observe.
- A globe and flashlight can be used to demonstrate night and day. When the room is darkened, this is a dramatic event.

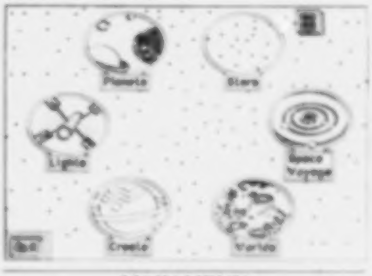
Tales about the moon will not only have children looking up, but around the world and into themselves.

EXPLORE SPACE— ON YOUR COMPUTER!

by Evelyn Woldman

At the early childhood level, opening up an encyclopedia, or even reading type in a textbook to learn about outer space holds very little appeal. Children at this age want to interact with their environment, move things around, watch things change. That's where the computer can help out!

A perfect program geared to this age group, as well as this subject area, is called *Learn About the Lights in the Night Sky*, by Wings for Learning/Sunburst (101 Castleton Street, P.O. Box 100, Pleasantville, NY 10570-0100)



MAIN MENU

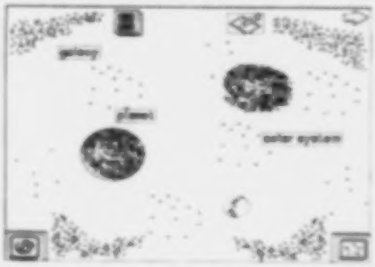
This program, available for Apple, Mac, or CD-ROM, introduces young children to the mysteries of the night sky. Through a variety of animated activities, children can explore the planets and constellations; they can even voyage into outer space. Children can also create their own planets, suns, moons, and constellations. Finally, more advanced students can use the program as a tool for writing as they describe or tell stories about the lights in the night sky.

The program has six major activities.

- **PLANETS** In this section, children use pictures to study the identifying features of Venus, Mars, Mercury, Saturn, Jupiter, and Earth. A Field Guide to the Planets is also available.
- **STARS** Here children learn about some of the constellations—Taurus, Cassiopeia, Draco, Orion and Leo—and also the Big and Little Dippers. An activity helps them to locate the North Star at night.
- **LIGHTS** This section explores other types of lights in the night sky, including meteors, comets, and satellites.
- **SPACE VOYAGE** Children travel through space, visiting our moon and other planets in the solar system. They explore the concept of day and night.

"CREATE"

- **CREATE** This section and the one that follows are wonderfully creative. Children can create their own moon, sun, planet, or constellation, and add space creatures to them.
- **WORLDS** Here children can not only create their own solar systems and universe, but also write stories about them.



"WORLDS"

This program is part of a series, all entitled "Learn About...." All are geared to the primary/elementary level. Other programs include *Insects*, *Human Body*, *Animals*, *Plants*, and more. The full series is coming out this winter on a single CD-ROM. In addition, Wings/Sunburst offers accompanying journals for your readers, intended as guides while the program is being used.

Although some of the sections in this program might be a little hard for the prereader, they can be quite successful with a little extra help from a parent volunteer or an older student. The program truly allows the young learner to "touch the untouchable!"

ICE CREAM CASTLES IN THE SKY

by Barbara Fischer

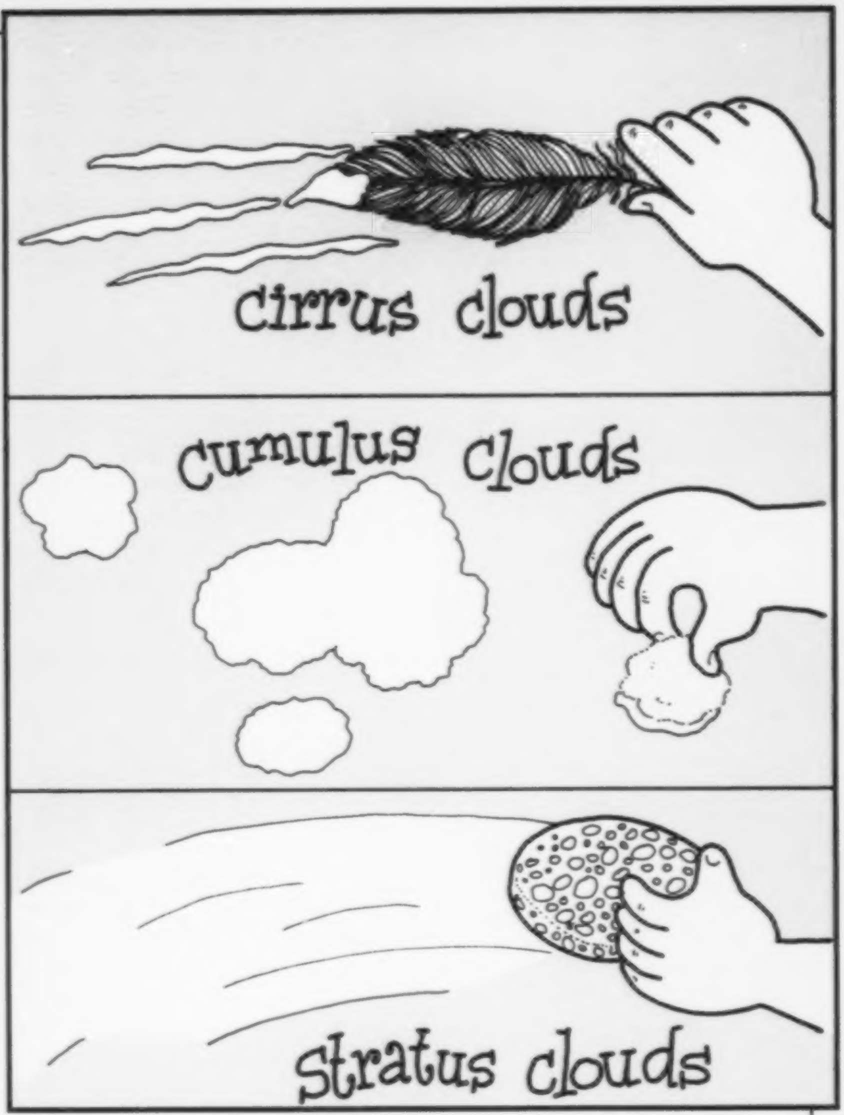
It's Spring—that teasing time when the weather does its annual dance of rain, sunshine, and wind. The sky becomes a stage for the everchanging clouds as winds whip them into ice cream castles. Bundle up your children and take a cloud walk.

What do you see? Clouds can form shapes in the sky. Do you see a fish or bird or perhaps a horse? It's fun to find pictures in the clouds. Clouds have their own names and places to be in the sky. *Cirrus* clouds are thin feathery clouds that stay way up high. *Cumulus* clouds are the big fluffy clouds that look like scoops of vanilla ice cream piled high in a dish. *Stratus* clouds are long blankets that wrap around the bottom of the sky. See if you find any of these on your walk.

Let's find out. Clouds are always in the sky. They are made of water drops. When clouds hold too much water, it rains. You and your children can make your own cloud and rain right in your classroom! Heat some water in a teakettle. When the water boils, you will see steam or a "cloud" form. (Be sure children keep away from the hot water and steam.) Now hold an aluminum pie plate in the steam. The plate will cool the cloud and drops of "rain" will fall or be "pulled" from the cloud.

How did the water get into the cloud? You can find out by pouring water into a jar. Place a piece of tape at the water line and leave the jar uncovered overnight. Where is the water line in the morning? Tell children that the water has evaporated or has been pulled up into the air and formed into a cloud.

Sparkling spider webs are fun to make. Have you ever seen a spider web covered with water droplets? These droplets sparkle when the sun touches them. The water in the air cooled during the night and clung to the web. These tiny droplets are called dew. Let your children make their own sparkling webs by dribbling glue in the shape of a spider web on black paper. Sprinkle silver glitter over the paper. Shake off



the excess glitter and you'll have a "dew" covered web. Don't forget to put a spider on the web!

Create different kinds of clouds. Bring out the can of shaving cream or fingerpaint and let children make thin feathery strokes for cirrus clouds. Big gobs of cream or paint become cumulus clouds. Pull the fingerpaint across the paper for stratus clouds. While children paint, play an environmental rain tape such as "Distant Thunder."

Where do the clouds stay in the sky? Your children can show where each of the three main types of clouds can be found. Fold a large blue sheet of paper into thirds horizontally. Label each section as follows: the top section—cirrus, the middle section—cumulus, and the bottom section—stratus. Help children dip feathers into white paint to make feather prints in the top section. Have them dip cotton puffs into the paint to make cluster prints in the middle section to look like cumulus clouds. Pull a paint dipped sponge across the bottom section to give a stratus cloud blanket effect.

Can you read the clouds? Take a peek outside. If you see high cirrus clouds or white, puffy, cumulus clouds, you can put your umbrella away. But, if the clouds are dark (water drops inside the cloud keep the sun from shining through) or if they are low stratus clouds, it might rain. Make a graph of the kinds of clouds that you see each day.

It Looked Like Spilt Milk by Charles G. Shaw (Harper & Row) is a great book to read before one of your cloud walks. As you and your children walk, ask them what they think the clouds look like. Write their comments as they tell you. Perhaps children might want to create their own cloud book. Pre-cut cloud shapes from white paper and let children arrange these shapes to form pictures on the pages of their books. Print the name of their cloud picture on each page and tie the pages together with yarn. Add a cover and each child will have a book that she can "read" to parents and friends. Tomie de Paola's *Cloud Book* (Holliday House) is another book that children will enjoy.

Clouds are fascinating and fun to watch as they float and drift on the wind. Spark your children's imagination —let them build their own ice cream castles in the sky.

MOVING—UP, UP, AND AWAY!

by Margery Kranyik

Natural science provides children with a variety of movement possibilities—things in the sky and things that fly. Before you begin, collect pictures of what children will be exploring. Discuss and make sure children understand how each skyward object moves. Then integrate your creative movement with activities on weather, science, or seasons.

Each of the following activities includes a chant for children to sing while moving.

Sun *"I see the sun, the sun sees me. Sitting in the shade of the apple tree."* Share a picture with children. Ask them how their bodies would look if they were the sun. (Rotating in a circle? Waving arms?) If your group is large, have half of the children be the moving sun while the others chant the verse.

Moon *"Mister Moon, Moon, Mister Silvery Moon, Please shine down on my bedroom."* Have children make construction paper moons with faces (crescent moon, full moon, new moon). Encourage them to move "across the sky." Divide children into three groups, some to change, others to "sleep" as the "moon" sails through the sky.

Rain *"Rain, rain, go away. The girls and boys here want to play."* Ask children how their bodies could look like rain falling from the sky (fluttering fingers from high position; low, twirling bodies).

Snow *"Snowflake, snowflake, twirling around. Falling slowly to the ground."* Ask children to imagine being a snowflake, falling slowly from the sky and being blown around by the wind. Make additional connections by singing and moving to "Snowflakes Falling from the Sky" from *Piggyback Songs* (Totline).

Stars *"Star light, star bright, shining in the sky at night."* Make a stick puppet prop of stars sprinkled with glitter. Have children move to the chant or to "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star."

Clouds *"White clouds, grey clouds, blowing all around. Quickly, quietly without a sound."* Ask children to imagine puffy, white clouds on a sunny day. *"How would you move if you were a puffy, white cloud blowing around the sky on a beautiful summer day?"* Contrast with clouds on a stormy day. *"If you were a cloud, how would you move across the sky during a storm?"*

Wind *"The wind blows high; the wind blows low. Sometimes fast and sometimes slow."* Take children outdoors with a scarf, streamers, or other flowing prop. Have them move around with the wind currents—up, down, fast, slow, in circles.

Birds, Bugs, and Butterflies Many creatures of nature also enjoy sky flight. Learn the songs "See the Bug" and "Two Little Blackbirds" from *Piggyback Songs for Infants and Toddlers* (Totline), "Fly, Fly Butterfly" from *Piggyback Songs* (Totline), or other poems and songs about flying creatures. Have children make stick puppets of each creature and move in response to the poem or song. Extend the activity by listening and then moving to "Flight of the Bumblebee" by Rimsky-Korsakoff. An environmental sound recording such as "Sounds of Nature" (Special Music Co.) is a pleasant addition to integrated creative movement activities.

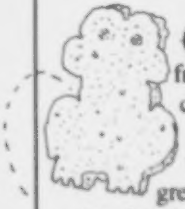
Rainy Day Fun

RAINING FROGS AND TOADS

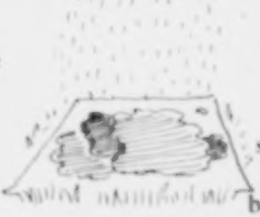
by Jeannine Perez

Enjoy early spring rains. The best kind of day for a celebration is a drizzly all day rain, but occasional "thunder boomer" party days are also fun. Tell your children that in some places people say, "it's raining cats and dogs" and in other places (like the Southwest), they say, "It's raining frogs and toads" as you celebrate the rains of Spring.

BEGIN WITH ART

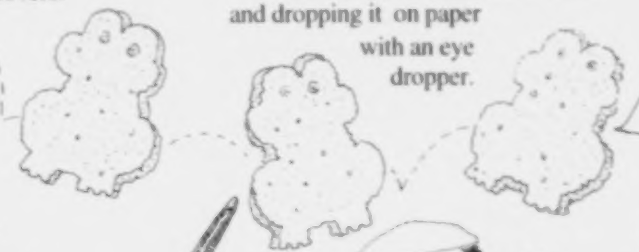


Cut frog shapes from sponges. Provide children with paper plate palettes coated with a thin layer of green or brown tempera paint. Let them stamp frogs on large sheets of paper. Then have them draw and create a suitable environment for the frogs, using paint or markers. These pictures make wonderful covers.

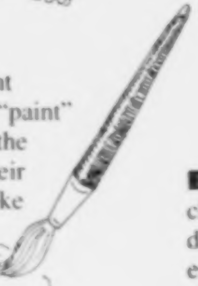


Sprinkle dry tempera paint in several spring colors on heavy sheets of paper or poster or tag boards. Then set them out under a drizzly rain while you watch "Artist Rain" create a painting from your dry indoor windows. Or do it inside by mixing colored tempera paint with water and dropping it on paper with an eye dropper.

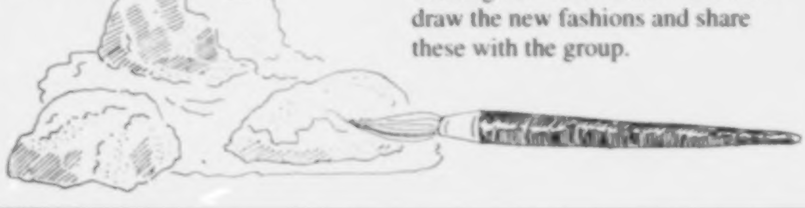
Use salt paint to paint shiny spring pictures. Mix two teaspoons salt with one teaspoon water, one teaspoon liquid starch. Add small amounts of tempera paints for color.



Let children use paint brushes and water to "paint" pebbles and rocks in the classroom. Notice their new wet colors just like the rain creates outdoors.



Encourage children to design some exciting new rain outfits! Let them draw the new fashions and share these with the group.



Make some wet-on-wet paintings. Give each child a sheet of white watercolor or other heavy paper and a damp sponge. Show them how to dampen their papers with broad sponge strokes, then drop blue, red, and yellow water colors on the wet paper. Turn and tilt the paper so that the colors run and blend. Talk about the new colors that result and the exciting shapes.

Rainy Day Fun

LANGUAGE, MUSIC, AND MOVEMENT

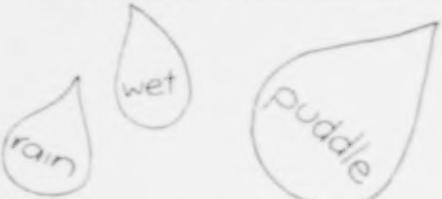
Help children make up their own poems and stories. Or collect rainy poems and read one before each naptime.

Do some problem-solving. Ask: *"What could you do if you get caught outside in a sudden rain storm?"* Encourage creative solutions. You may need to start with some examples such as: *"...hold big leaves over my head; do a sun dance; or swim home in puddles."*

Do this Rainy Day fingerplay. Wiggle your fingers while you chant:

Water from the sky.
Put up my umbrella
to keep me warm and dry.
Drip-a-drop. Drip-
a-drop.
Frogs and toads
have fun.
Drip-a-drop.
Drip-a-drop.
And here comes
the sun!

Make your own indoor rainstorm. Sit in a circle with legs stretched out in front. Listen to the sounds of rain. Say: *"Do as I do."* Snap your fingers very slowly. Say, *"Oh, I think I feel some raindrops. Dot-a-dot-dot."* Slap your thighs slowly, then faster and faster. Say, *"It's raining harder. It's raining frogs and toads."* Stomp your feet and continue slapping your thighs. Occasionally stop and clap loudly. Say, *"I even hear thunder."* Now reverse the procedure and slow back down to a sprinkle/drizzle. Finally, shout: *"Hooray! The sun is out."* Raise your arms to make a sun and your face to feel the warm sun.

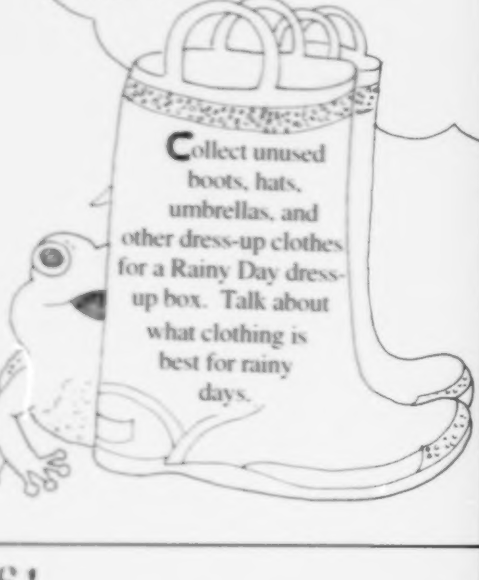


Cut large rain drops from blue construction paper, and ask children to help think of rain words to write on each. See how many rain drops you create. Then let children role play at group time by sitting under an umbrella (real or imaginary), while a teacher drops a shower of rain words over their heads.

Make construction paper puddles of varying shapes and sizes. Spread them on the floor, put on music with a rhythm, and see how many ways children can cross them (jump, hop, step, run, make a bridge), without "getting wet" (landing on a puddle).

Sing Rainy Day Songs. We made up this one. (Tune: "Are You Sleeping")

It is raining.
It is dripping.
On my arms.
On my head.
Drip, drop little raindrops.
Drip, drop little raindrops,
Gets me wet.
Gets me wet.

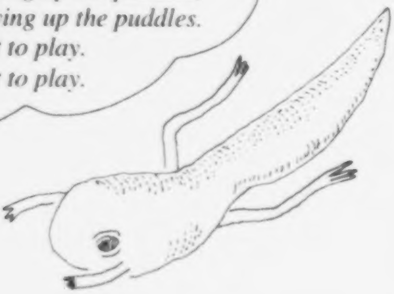


Collect unused boots, hats, umbrellas, and other dress-up clothes for a Rainy Day dress-up box. Talk about what clothing is best for rainy days.

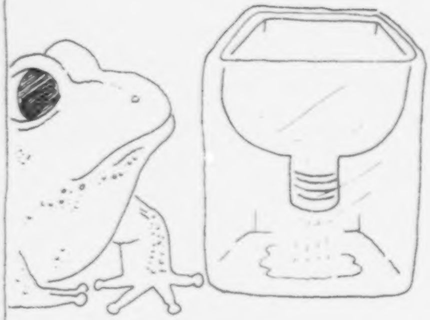
SNACKS AND SCIENCE

Help children use observation skills on rainy days. Think of the many positive things about spring rains. Go to the window and listen quietly to the sounds of rain. Then watch the rain for a few minutes, talk about the colors on rainy day, and of all the ways that rain changes the way it looks outside. Children could even draw twin pictures, a sunny playground and a rainy playground.

When the sun comes out,
we made up new verses:
The sun is shining.
The sun is shining.
Bright and warm.
Bright and warm.
Drying up the puddles,
Drying up the puddles.
Out to play.
Out to play.

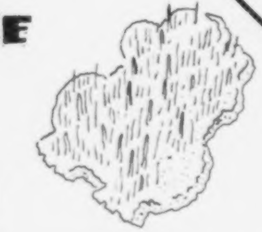


If possible, buy tadpoles for an aquarium, and watch the stages of development. (Realize that sometimes the changes take much longer than you've planned.) Make a chart of the changes you observe.



Watch rain hit the sidewalk, or catch it in a rain gauge. Tell children that rain falls about six miles per hour when there is no wind. Use a pint-sized plastic bottle which has been cut across about an inch below the place where it widens. Take the top, turn it upside down, and fit it into the cut opening. (This makes a kind of inside funnel that keeps rain from splashing back out.) Tape the two top edges together securely. Mark the sides of the bottle (from the bottom up) in centimeter divisions. Set your rain gauge outside and measure the rainfall.

You can also check the size of raindrops, and demonstrate that not all drops are the same size. Make a simple measuring device by putting a layer of flour in a flat pan. Set it outside in the rain for just a few minutes, then cover and bring it in. Strain or sieve the flour. The raindrops cause lumps in the flour, and the bigger the lumps, the larger the raindrops falling down.



Plant grass seed on sponge shapes, and place in "puddles" of water on saucers or plastic lids. Keep the sponges damp and in a dim place until the seed begins to sprout, then put them in the sun. If you cut sponges into toad and frog shapes, you will end up with hairy frogs!

If the sun comes out and it turns bright and warm, go out and splash in a few puddles and look at your reflections in the puddles. If this isn't possible, make your own tiny indoor puddles with medicine droppers, a small container of water, and waxed paper. Look at the drops, and note their rounded shapes.

RAINBOWS—
A CELEBRATION OF COLOR

by Catherine Reeves

A long time ago, people thought rainbows were a magical bridge across the sky. Some people also believed that if you found the end of the rainbow where it touched the earth, you would find a pot of gold there. Children also look at rainbows as magical things. Show them that a rainbow is a natural occurrence and that even they might be able to make one themselves.

A rainbow is simply caused by sunlight shining through raindrops. Sunlight looks white but it is really made up of many colors. As the sunlight passes through each drop, it splits into its separate colors. These colors are violet (red-blue), indigo (blue-red), blue, green, yellow, orange, and red. Because they blend, we may only see four or five colors at a time.

During your science lessons, children can make their own rainbows. There are several ways this can be done, depending on the age of your group.

▲ Have children change the color of light. You will need a variety of different colors of cellophane. Start out by having children shine flashlights through each color. Then change the color by combining layers of different colored cellophane.

▲ Outdoors, turn on a hose. Adjust the nozzle to a fine spray. Have children stand with their backs to the sun. They will see a rainbow shining in the spray.

▲Children can make a rainbow indoors on a sunny day. For this rainbow experiment, you will need a shallow cake pan with about two inches of water in it. You will also need a small mirror and a sunny window. Find a sunny spot in the room. Have children take turns with the mirror or use several pans and mirrors and work in small groups. Have them hold the mirror at an angle in the pan of water. Let the sun shine on the mirror. A rainbow will appear on the wall or the ceiling.

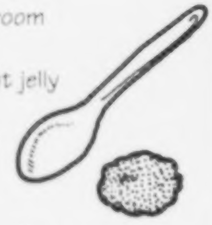
▲Show children some glass prisms. Discuss what a prism is. (It is a transparent solid, usually made of glass, with three solid ends. It separates white light passing through it into its individual parts, the colors of the rainbow.) Shine light through the prism to show children how the prism separates the light. It will work best against a white background.

Rainbow Sandwiches

by Kathy Faggella

You'll Need:

- Four slices of white bread (a good stiff and solid loaf)
- 3 oz. package cream cheese at room temperature
- Strawberry or grape jelly and mint jelly
- Plastic spoon and knife
- Sharp knife (ADULT USE ONLY)

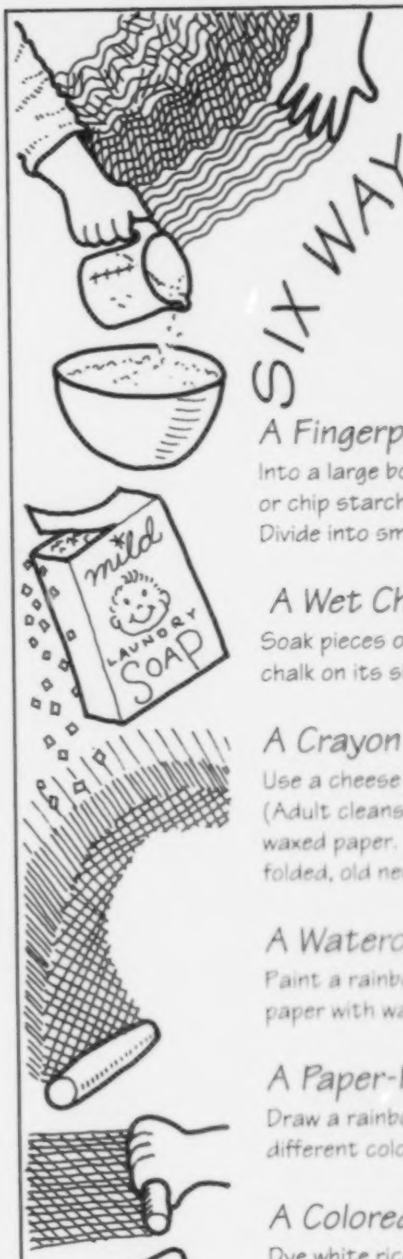


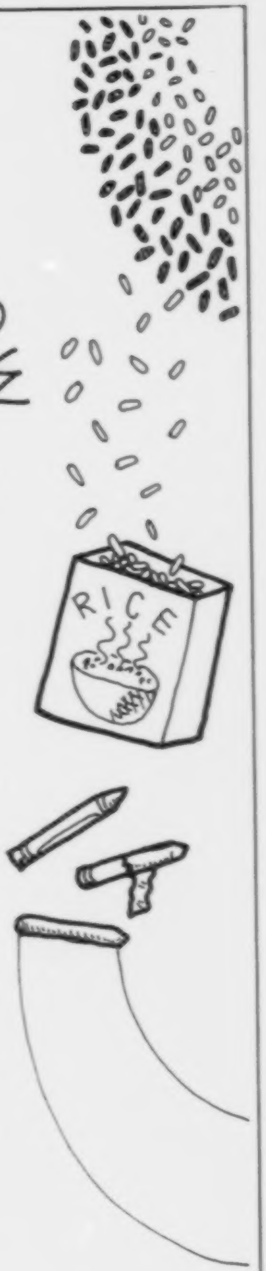
What to Do:

1. Use a plastic knife to cut crusts off of each slice of bread.
2. With plastic spoon and knife, spread 2 tsp. of each filling on bread slices in layers of strawberry or grape jelly, cream cheese, and mint jelly.
3. Stack slices on top of each other. Place into refrigerator for 1/2 hour, if possible, to make slicing easier.
4. Adult cuts sandwiches with sharp knife into two tall triangles or two tall, long rectangles, or four tall, small squares.

SIX WAYS TO MAKE A RAINBOW

by Kathy Faggella





A Fingerpaint Rainbow

Into a large bowl, put 1 cup mild laundry soap powder, 1 cup dry powder or chip starch, and 1 cup water. Beat with a rotary beater until thick. Divide into small bowls and add food colors.

A Wet Chalk Rainbow

Soak pieces of colored chalk for about 5 minutes in a meat tray. Use chalk on its side for a dramatic effect.

A Crayon Shaving Rainbow

Use a cheese grater and grate broken crayons. Keep colors separate. (Adult cleans grater in boiling water.) Sprinkle into rainbow form on waxed paper. Cover with another piece of waxed paper. Place on folded, old newspapers. Cover with a sheet of plain paper. Iron.

A Watercolor Rainbow

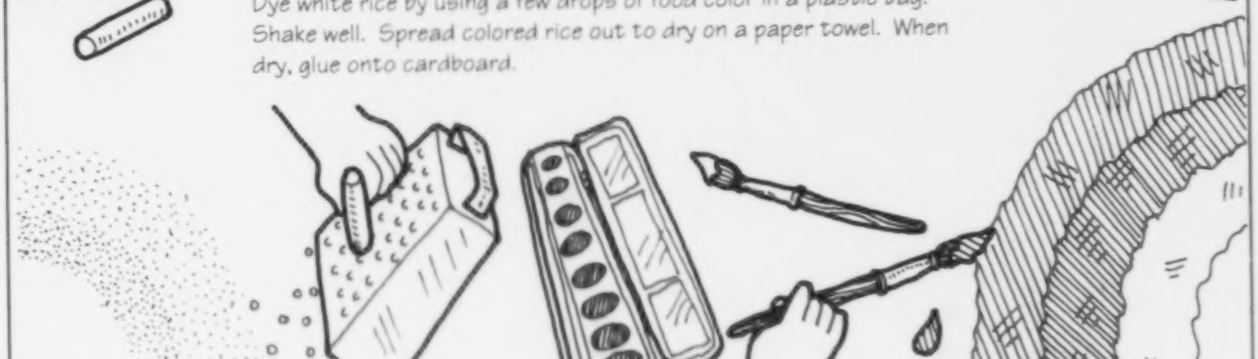
Paint a rainbow with watercolor paints. (Experiment by first wetting paper with water.)

A Paper-Peeled Crayon Rainbow

Draw a rainbow by holding a paper-peeled crayon on its side. Use a different color for each rainbow stripe.

A Colored Rice Rainbow

Dye white rice by using a few drops of food color in a plastic bag. Shake well. Spread colored rice out to dry on a paper towel. When dry, glue onto cardboard.



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EXPERIMENT WITH WEATHER

by Karen Stephens

Teachers often complain about weather interrupting planned curriculum and daily routines. I encourage teachers to look at weather positively, rather than negatively. When properly integrated into the curriculum, changing weather can lead children into wondrous adventures.

Weather affects what we do, how we dress, what we eat, where we play, how we travel, and, not least of which, it affects our mood for the day! All these topics are worthy of thinking and learning about in the early childhood classroom. Next time a storm cloud roles in, don't cringe; rejoice! Here are some ideas that will make your day—rain or shine!

EXPERIMENT WITH SUNNY DAYS

☼ Let children explore how sunny days create **shadows.** Talk about what a shadow is and when it appears. Play shadow tag. Make shadow statues. Put on shadow puppet shows.

While standing on a concrete pad or sidewalk, divide children into pairs. Ask one child of each pair to pose their body so it makes a shadow. The partner then traces around the body shadow with chalk. Let children take turns doing this with their partner. If interest holds, let children draw around the outline of other shadows they find on the concrete.

☼ Experiment with heat that is generated on sunny days. Ask children to hold one hand in the sunshine and one in the shade. Which is warmer? Why? Lay out items of various materials in the sunshine: metal pans, cookie sheets, wooden blocks, rubber shoes, newspaper, cloth fabric. Which items are warmer? Cooler? Where is the heat coming from?

☼ Encourage children to observe what people wear on sunny days. Graph items such as sun visors, eye glasses, shorts, sandals, turbans, etc. Provide children with dark-colored shirts and light-colored shirts to wear in the sun. Which was warmer? Cooler?

☼ Explore how the sun helps growing plants. Find a batch of petunias planted in the shade and one batch in the sunshine. Which patch grows better? Why?

EXPERIMENT WITH WINDY DAYS

☼ Blow bubbles outside. Where does the wind carry them?

☼ Play with streamers. Run with fabric draped around children like capes. (An alternative to Superman capes would be butterfly capes, king or queen capes, or fairy capes.)

☼ Fly kites.

☼ Make pinwheels.

☼ Hang whirligigs from tree branches or poles.

- Create wind chimes and hang them outside a classroom window.
- Mount a weather vane in the play yard and encourage children to check it daily for "prevailing" winds.
- Wash baby doll clothes and then hang them outside on a line to dry. Hang one set in the wind and one set in a sheltered area. Which set of clothes dries first? Why?
- Ask children to run with the wind. Then ask them to run against the wind. Which is easiest? Hardest?

EXPERIMENT WITH SNOWY DAYS

- Stomp through snow after a snow storm. Follow animal tracks. Look at snowflakes with magnifying glasses.
- Bring a bucket of snow into the classroom. How long does it take to melt?
- Look up at the snow clouds. What do they look like?
- Videotape a snowstorm and watch it later into the classroom. Encourage children to observe the tape closely and describe what they see.
- Keep track of the amount of snow fall for a month. Graph daily snow fall.
- Observe people walking along the street. What types of clothing do they wear on a snowy day? Look for boots, mittens, hats, ear muffs, coats, face masks, scarfs, and so on.

EXPERIMENT WITH RAINY DAYS

- During a gentle rain, go outside with umbrellas and take a walk. Talk about the sounds and smells. Ask children to stretch one hand out from under the umbrellas. How does the rain feel?
- Go for a walk after a rainfall. Note puddles in the road. Can children find puddles on leaves or flowerpetals. Observe how animals and insects use the puddles of water for drinking water. Note worms on the ground after a rain. Why do they come to the surface? Observe how long it takes water to evaporate after a rainfall. Where has the water "disappeared" to? Find mud puddles and measure their width during the course of a morning or day. Why do they get smaller and smaller?
- With close supervision, put a drop of rainwater on a microscope slide. What do children see?
- Lay a selection of fabrics out in the rain: terry cloth, silk, vinyl, rubber, plastic, nylon, and so on. Observe and analyze which fabrics absorbed or repelled the rain water. Which type of fabric would children want to wear in a rain storm? Why? Observe people walking outside on a rainy day. What type of clothing do people wear in the rain? Why? (Look for rubber boots, hats, raincoats, umbrellas, scarves, and so on.)

WEATHER-RELATED FIELD TRIPS

Field trips and follow-up dramatic play experiences help children gain first hand information about weather. Concrete, real experiences help children understand the impact weather has on their everyday lives. Following are suggestions for field trips related to weather.

- **Hot Air Balloon Lift Off** (wind)
- **Kite Flying Contest** (wind)
- **Weather Station** (wind, rain, snow, sunshine, blizzards, hurricanes, tornadoes)
- **Observatory** (clear skies, cloud patters, cloud movement)
- **Museum Display on Solar or Wind Energy** (sun, wind)
- **Airport** (wind, storms, breezes, rain, snow, ice storms)

IN THE BOOK CORNER

WHAT DO YOU SEE UP THERE?

by Karel Kilimnik

Look up and see hills, trees, fog, bridges, and snow. If you are two years old, you look up to see people, chairs, and even large dogs; it all depends on your perspective. Wherever you start from, looking up reveals new worlds. Let's explore a few with children's books.

Catherine Paladino has lovingly selected a collection of poems and photos in *Land, Sea, & Sky: Poems to Celebrate the Earth* (Little, Brown). The first poem "Looking Around" sets a respectful tone with "*..ants own the ground...I hope they don't mind my looking around.*"

A feeling of awe suffuses the book encouraging us to care for the earth. The photographs lend themselves easily to children observing, describing, and asking questions. Different environments such as mountains, fields, the ocean, and the beach are included.

A young girl looks up to see fog "pulling itself down the mountain" in *Fog* by Susie Gregg Fowler (Greenwillow). Everything outside the house disappears and the girl's family settles down inside to listen to the fog as Grandma advises. Even Happy, the dog, is a little spooked. As the silence grows, each person hears something different until Grandma figures out what is really needed to help them deal with the all-enveloping fog.

This delightful book gives listeners a chance to predict what will happen next. *Fog* can also be used to talk about what families do together at home (in good or "bad" weather, such as snowstorms or thunderstorms.)

Looking up sometimes inspires questions such as, "Why is the sky blue?" or "Why is the sky so far away?" Over 500 years ago, the Bini tribe of Nigeria told a story to answer the second question. *Why the Sky Is Far Away: a Nigerian Folktale* was written by Mary-Joan Gerson (Little, Brown), who was inspired by her Peace Corps stint in Nigeria to retell this ancient African tale. The vibrant illustrations by Carla Golembe practically jump off the page. This book is a good companion to *Land, Sea & Sky* for helping children become more aware of and concerned for our environment.

Bridges require a lot of looking up at. *I Know a Bridge* by Jeff Sheppard (Macmillan) examines all kinds of bridges—some for toys; some for bikes; one with a roof to keep you dry; the Golden Gate Bridge; a board across a puddle. Simple text accompanied by lush illustrations makes this a very accessible book for young children. Use it as a springboard to create your own book of bridge drawings and stories, use blocks and Legos to create bridges.

Look up in winter to see (and feel) the snow falling. Susan Jeffers does a magnificent job illustrating one of Robert Frost's most beloved poems in *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening* (Dutton). Her illustrations, stark at times, yet rich with detail, complement Frost's simple, yet profound, language. We wade through the snow with the bundled-up man in his sleigh drawn by his little horse, as he savors the snowy delights. He pauses deep in the snow-laden woods and then gets back in his sleigh. *"But I have promises to keep, and miles to go before I sleep."* This book sets a tone of deep appreciation and enjoyment of a winter snowstorm and the frosty delights it brings.

DAY & NIGHT; BALLOONS & BIRDS

by Paula Gaj Sitarz

These picture books invite children to "look up" to see what's in the sky at night and during the day; and to notice what's in the sky: balloons, airplanes, birds, the moon, and stars.

Young children are introduced to the activities that occur when the sun is out in *The Sun Day* by Mordicai Gerstein (Harper & Row). They are invited to see the sun rise and to look up at noon to see airplanes, skyscrapers, and cranes. Throughout the sunny day, they'll see peaches high in the trees, balls bouncing in the air, and kites in the sky.

Ellen Kandoian in *Under the Sun* (Dodd, Mead) offers a simple explanation of day and night around the world. When a young girl asks where the sun goes down when she's in bed, her mother explains that a little boy on the Mississippi River watches it set, then a little girl on the great plains watches it go down over the prairie, and so on to Hawaii, Japan, and on to China where a panda sees the sun disappear among the trees.

Charlene loves to stay up late at night in *Night Owls* by Sharon Phillips Denslow (Bradbury Press). When Charlene's nephew William visits in midsummer, they celebrate with a night picnic.

In *Night Ride* by Bernie and Mati Karlin (Simon & Schuster), Billy discovers what an interesting place the world is in the dark when he and his mom ride all night in their car to reach Billy's grandparents' home. As the hours pass, Billy looks up and sees many things including the full moon, a helicopter, a plane coming in for a landing, carnival rides lit up against the sky, and a even a shooting star.

Cynthia Rylant introduces children to *Night in the Country* (Bradbury Press). Watch great owls with their marble eyes swoop among the trees, hear an apple fall from a tree, listen to the night frogs, and toward morning, see the lone bird warn of approaching sunrise.

Mary Calhoun introduces children to a Siamese cat who has quite an adventure when he leaps into his owner's hot air balloon in *Hot-Air Henry* (William Morrow). When Henry's claw snags on the cord that flies the balloon's burner, up Henry goes. Watch the balloon as it blows where the wind takes it. Henry has many adventures and ultimately lands the balloon safely.

In a *Balloon for Grandad* by Nigel Gray (Orchard Books), Sam is unhappy when his red balloon with silver stars floats out the open back door and rises above the tall buildings. Sam's dad consoles him by saying that the balloon is traveling high over mountains, across the sea, over the desert to Sam's grandad who lives in Africa.

Diane Siebert uses sensory language in her rhymed text about all types of airplanes in *Plane Song* (Harper Collins). Siebert's text is complemented by Vincent Nasta's breathtaking, realistic, double-page paintings. Children will see jets, cargo planes, bush planes, planes used for aerobatics, planes through day, night, at sunset from a pilot's view out the window, and as viewed from the sky.

When a young girl can't get to sleep, her mother soothes her with images of a flock of birds flying south through the night in *Flock of Birds* by Charlotte Zolotow (Crowell). The birds rise above meadow and marsh and fly across mountains, valleys, oceans, and towns.

Tejima Keizaburo combines a poetic text and stunning woodcuts in *Owl Lake* (Philomel Books) to take children to a lake surrounded by mountains and trees. When darkness descends, an owl family appears and Father Owl flies across the water to hunt for food. Children will see Father Owl's feathers glistening in the moonlit sky and his spectacular wing spread.

STILL IN THE BOOK CORNER

THE WORLD ABOVE OUR HEADS

by Sandra Malcolm

A whole world exists above our heads. We need to encourage children to look up and experience the wonders of the sky. The books presented here do just that.

STARGAZERS

by Gail Gibbons (Holiday House) is a nonfiction book about astronomy. It is written in a very understandable, narrative style. The illustrations add clarity and interest to the information.

BEFORE READING, ask children if they have ever gone outside at night to look at the stars. Did they just look up at the stars or did they use a special instrument to help them see better? Challenge children with the question, "Do we see any stars in the daytime? If yes, what stars"?

AFTER READING, help children build vocabulary by defining and discussing the following words from the story: *astronomer, atmosphere, galaxy, constellation, telescope, observatory, planetarium.* Then ask questions such as: "Why did people long ago name the constellations"? "Why does the Milky Way look milky"? "Why do the stars look like they twinkle"?

ACTIVITIES:

▲ If possible, bring to class a telescope. After a discussion about the instrument, allow children time to look through it. Discuss what happens when it is used and how it helps people look at the stars.

▲ Make stencils of the constellations by punching holes where the stars should be. Give children black construction paper and chalk to transfer the constellations to their paper. They can connect the stars to show the constellation if they like.

WHAT WILL THE WEATHER BE LIKE TODAY?

by Paul Rogers (Greenwillow) uses rhyme to discuss weather all over the world.

BEFORE READING, ask children: "Why do you think it is important to know what the weather will be each day? "Do you think the weather is the same all over the world?"

AFTER READING, look at the pictures on the page that says, "Will it be windy?" Ask questions such as: "How does the illustrator show us that it is windy"? "How does he show us warm weather"? "Stormy weather?"

Help children try to explain what happens when sunshine and rain meet?

ACTIVITIES:

▲ Videotape several weather forecasts that show weather maps of the USA or cut weather maps out of the newspaper and enlarge, if possible. On a map, show with symbols the various kinds of weather occurring in the USA all at the same time.

▲ Have children choose a type of weather to paint a picture of. Display the pictures on a bulletin board or encourage children to dictate or write a sentence about their picture. Make a classroom weather book.

SOMEONE IS EATING THE SUN

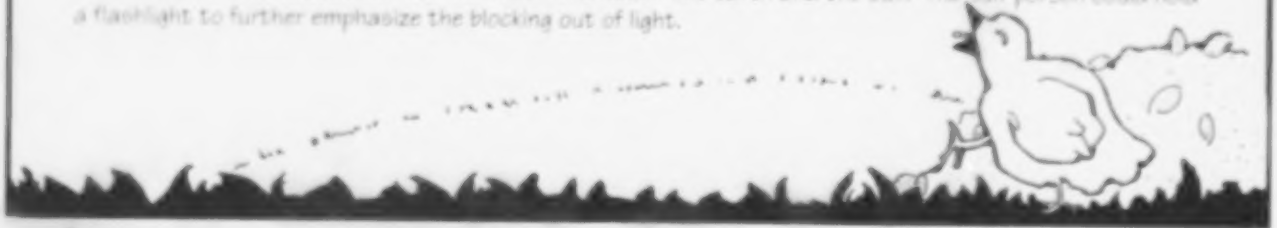
by Ruth Sonneborn (Random House) tells the story of Hen, who is alarmed when the sun begins to disappear in the middle of the day. She warns the other animals who also share her concern until Turtle explains to them what an eclipse is.

BEFORE READING, read or tell your favorite version of the traditional folk tale, "The Sky is Falling" (Henny Penny). Discuss what happens in that story. Ask, "What would happen if Hen thought someone was eating the sun?"

AFTER READING, have children explain what is normally happening when the sun disappears. Ask: "Did someone eat the sun? What really happened to it? Why couldn't the animals see the moon in the sky before it covered the sun?"

ACTIVITIES

- ▲ Show pictures or a video of a real eclipse. Discuss what is happening.
- ▲ Act out the story as you re-read it. Encourage children to use different voices for the characters and to use motions characteristic of the animal they are portraying.
- ▲ Using cardboard cutouts to represent the sun, the moon, and the earth, re-enact the eclipse. Have children hold the cutouts and move the moon in between the earth and the sun. The sun-person could hold a flashlight to further emphasize the blocking out of light.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY, MOON

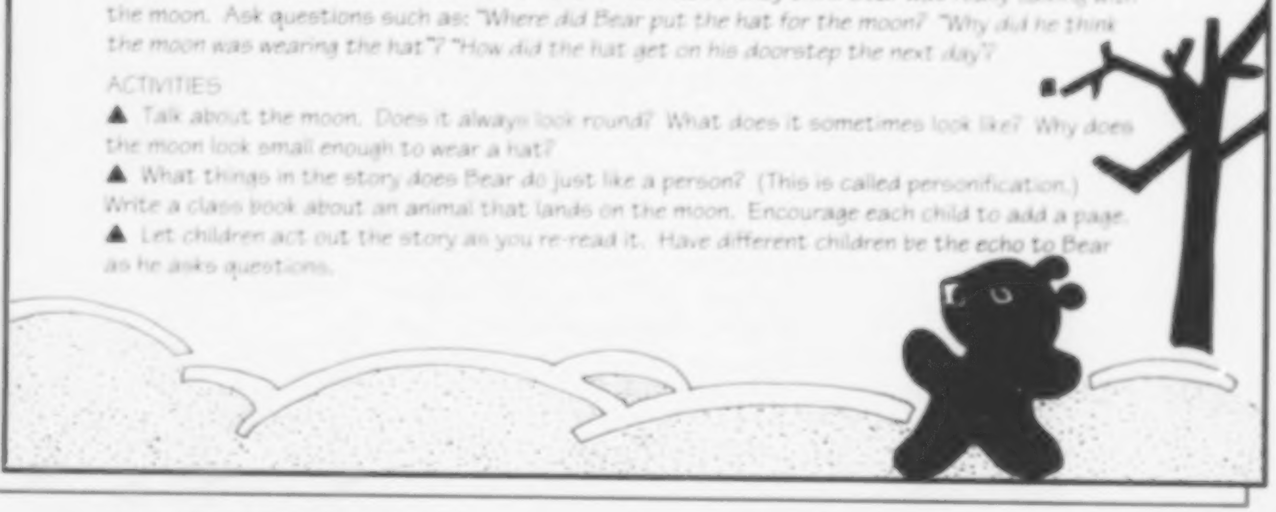
by Frank Asch (Prentice-Hall) *describes echoes through a fanciful story about a bear who talks to the moon. Bear buys the moon a beautiful hat for its birthday because he thinks the moon shares his birthday.*

BEFORE READING, have children explain what they would like for birthday presents and record their answers. Then ask: *"Do you think the moon could ask for a present?" "What do you think the moon would ask for"?*

AFTER READING, discuss echoes with children. Then ask if they think Bear was really talking with the moon. Ask questions such as: *"Where did Bear put the hat for the moon? "Why did he think the moon was wearing the hat"? "How did the hat get on his doorstep the next day"?*

ACTIVITIES

- ▲ Talk about the moon. Does it always look round? What does it sometimes look like? Why does the moon look small enough to wear a hat?
- ▲ What things in the story does Bear do just like a person? (This is called personification.) Write a class book about an animal that lands on the moon. Encourage each child to add a page.
- ▲ Let children act out the story as you re-read it. Have different children be the echo to Bear as he asks questions.



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FINE-FEATHERED FRIENDS

by Susan Peterson

Woody Woodpecker, the Roadrunner, Tweety Bird, Ducks (Donald, Daisy, and Daffy, to name a few), Woodstock (Snoopy's friend), and Big Bird are just a few of the earliest associations most children have with birds.

Introduce a fascinating and fun unit on our feathered friends by asking children to name cartoon birds. With the aid of visuals, ask children what makes real birds different from other animals. Ask if any of them have a pet parakeet or other bird. Let them tell about it.

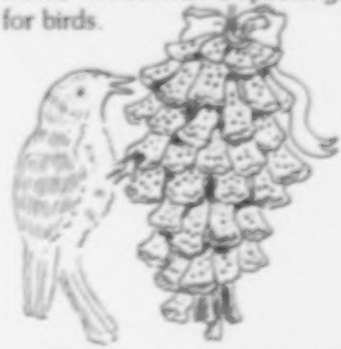
Next, have children do some higher order thinking by comparing common characteristics of birds to those of other animals. (A good question to ask them might be, *"What do birds have that dogs don't have?"*) Provide lots of books and nature magazines with pictures of birds so children can see birds in their natural habitats. Children will have lots of fun learning and imitating different bird sounds (owl, parrot, for example).

After introducing the "bird" theme, provide youngsters with creative hands-on activities that will lead to a better environment for birds in their area. Explain that people can be friends to wild birds in three ways: by providing bird feeders (food), bird houses (shelter), and birdbaths (water). Children can make inexpensive items for use in the school yard, at home, or for gifts to give others.

BIRD FEEDERS

Early winter is a great time to provide birds with extra food since natural food (berries, seeds, and insects) may be hard for them to find. But in many areas of the country, this time of year is also a challenging time for birds to find food. An easy feeder may be constructed by putting a plastic tray in an elevated area. Make sure the area is easily visible to children. Mixed seed can be purchased (or donated) for the tray. Dried cereal or bread could be put on the tray and will be eaten by many birds.

Many insect-eating birds, such as woodpeckers and chickadees, prefer suet or other animal fat. Suet, purchased inexpensively from the grocery store, can be put in a mesh fruit bag and hung from a tree or post near a window. If pine cones are plentiful in your area, children may gather them, cover them with peanut butter, and decorate them with crushed peanuts or dried fruit. By attaching bright bows and string hanger to this feeder "ornament," it becomes a special gift for birds.



There are many excellent community resources to assist in teaching about birds. Volunteers from State Game and Fish commissions, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Audubon Societies, and Natural History Museums may be willing to share their time and resources. Children's magazines such as *Ranger Rick* and library books on the topic of birds, bird feeders, and constructing bird shelters are readily available.

Children involved in this unit will improve their observation skills (They'll always be on the alert for feeding birds!), increase their understanding of the environment and its impact on animals, and gain a feeling of importance by helping *their* fine, feathered friends.

IT'S A BIRD!

by Susan Mills

Bird watching is a great kick-off to an exciting spring as children watch birds and learn about their behavior. Put a bird feeder outside your classroom, or sprinkle bird seed on the ground in the same area for several days. Look closely at the birds who are attracted to your area. You'll see some birds throughout the year; these are called *resident birds*. They do not migrate or fly to warmer places for the winter. In early spring, newcomers arrive along with the return of warmer weather.

Spark interest early by displaying posters of birds. Gather a selection of bird books from the library, and get a few field guides as well. Children will start trying to identify what they see or just explore the possibilities in the books.

A lot can be discovered through simple observation. Take your class outside. Be very still and listen to the sounds around you. Cars, planes, sirens, people—but keep listening. There are many different birds living as close to you as the classroom door. Look around. What birds do you see? What colors are they? Do they eat together? Are some of them friends? How can you tell?

Binoculars make bird watching really fun. Your local bird club may be a resource for equipment. Let children practice using binoculars by looking at a person. Cardboard tubes from toilet paper towels can also be used by children to help them focus on a bird that is far away.

ALL ABOUT BILLS

Look carefully at a bird. What shape is its bill? Is it long and pointy, or short and wide? This shape is suited to the food it eats. Looking at the shape of the bill can help you identify the family and species that the bird belongs to. As you recognize the bill shape and size, you will begin to notice other features of a bird that makes it unique.

Look at a picture of a parrot. The wide curved bill can open wide enough to hold an orange! Fruit is its favorite meal, and it is equipped with the mouth to cut open fruits easily.

The duck's wide flat bill is perfect for doing what it wants to do to eat. It sticks its bill into the mud to get insects and other stuff out of the muck.

The goldfinch has a bill that is short and strong. It is perfect for cracking seeds. This bird's first choice is seeds, but it will also eat insects.

A narrow, sharply-pointed bill is used to poke around in tight places. The wren finds its meals in brush piles, retrieving spiders and other bugs. Its bill couldn't crack open a seed.

The screech owl really looks different. Its bill is short and fat, with a hook on the end of it. It is a meat eater. It eats small mammals such as mice and other rodents. There would be too many of these critters if there weren't owls and other predators.

The woodpecker pecks a hole in a tree using a chisel-shaped bill that works like a drill. Then the bird inserts a long, sharp, sticky tongue into the tree and licks up bugs.

A bird that swoops around a bit like a bat is different from other birds. The irregular flight of the chimney swift is due to its feeding habits. The wide gaping mouth enables the bird to fly through the air with an open mouth, literally sucking bugs out of the early evening sky.

Bird watching takes time and patience and offers teachers and children a rare opportunity to become aware of an entire class of animals that are found wherever we live. Use these amazing animals to teach your class about life, survival, and beauty. It will be a spring to remember.

IT'S A PLANE!

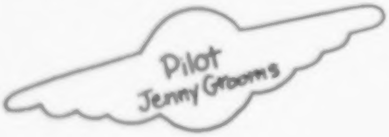
by Barbara F. Backer

Preschoolers look up whenever they hear an airplane. They are fascinated by the sound, by the glint of sunlight on the shiny metal, and by the sight of a big noisy object moving in the sky.

Use that interest to spark learning. Begin by setting up the classroom environment.

HOUSE OR DRAMATIC PLAY CENTER

- Place small suitcases or travel bags and used airline tickets in the dramatic play center. Add a few maps, airline magazines, and pictures of exotic places. (These are available from your local travel agency or airline.) Trace and cut out construction paper "Captain's Wings" pins for each of your children.



Tape these to children's shirts. (Avoid real pins. They are sharp and can be dangerous!)

Children enjoy setting classroom chairs in rows to simulate an airplane's interior. Or, they may prefer to use blocks to outline an airplane shape on the floor. They can sit inside this shape.

- Use the house center as the flight attendants' station. Let children brew imaginary coffee and pour pretend drinks into disposable cups. They can carry these on a tray to the pilot and passengers.

SNACK

For snack, let children put cereal pieces and dried fruit bits in zip-locking sandwich bags. Have children take these on the airplane, or "flight attendants" can serve the bagged snacks to hungry passengers.

ART

- Have each child trace and cut out the pattern on page 33. Cut a slit in the plane's body and slide in the wings. Stabilize the wings with tape, as shown.

Attach a string or piece of yarn to the nose of the plane. Children hold the string and swing the plane over and around their bodies, or they run outside with the planes flying behind them.

- Make another variety of airplane by gluing two popsicle sticks together. One is the body; the other is the wings. If desired, add windows with markers and/or paint the airplane. Have children make several and hang them from the ceiling. You'll feel like you're near O'Hare airport with all of the planes overhead!

- Use file folders to make suitcases in the Art Center. From magazines or catalogs, let children cut clothing or other items to "pack" for a trip. They can glue these inside the file folder. Add tag board handles to the file folder, if desired. Draw a luggage tag shape on the folder's outside, and print the child's name in the shape.

MUSIC

Teach children to sing the following song while "flying" their planes. (Tune: "I'm a Little Teapot")

I'm a little airplane, see me zoom.
I can fly around the room.
I can fly up high or fly down low.
Just swing my string and watch me go.

MATH

Purchase a bag of plastic airplanes (available at dollar stores) to use these for counting, sorting, and matching.

Make airplane hangers for these planes. Collect six small shoe boxes. Set the boxes on their sides, then place a number (0-5) on each box. Have children park the correct number of planes in each hanger.

CIRCLE TIME

- Cut airplane shapes from felt.

Make two each of various colors. Place one of each color on the flannelboard. Let children match the remaining airplanes to those on the board.

✈ Try the following fingerplay with the group.

Five little airplanes in a row,
(Hold up 5 fingers.)
Some go fast; some go slow.
(Move hand fast, then slowly.)
They fly up high and then zoom down,
(Fly hand up, then down.)
And slowly, slowly touch the ground.
(Slowly bring hand down to the ground.)

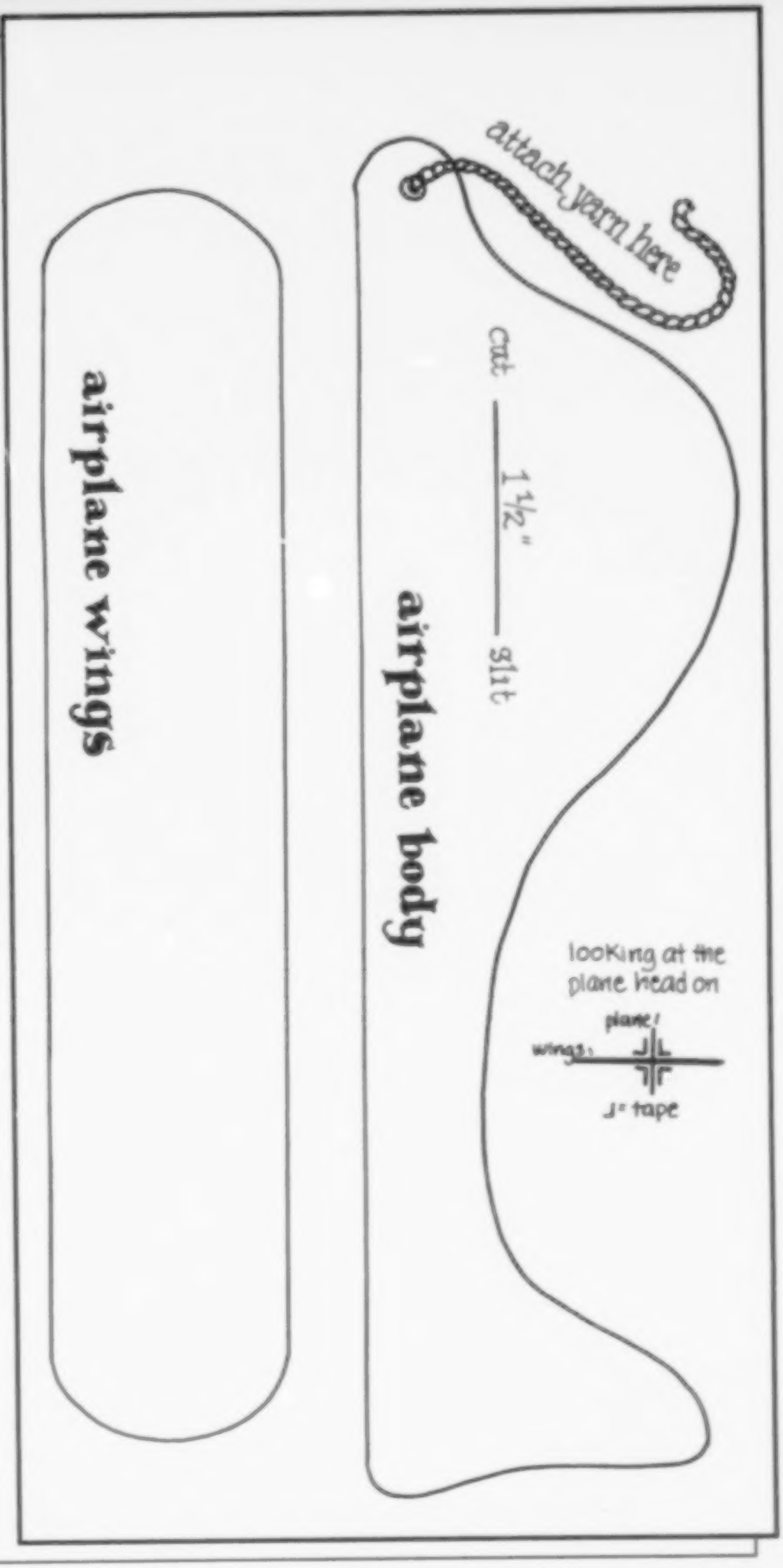
LANGUAGE

Place a toy airplane on the floor beside each child. Have children follow your directions and stand near, beside, under, on, in front of, or behind the "airplane."

BOOK CORNER

Enjoy these and other books about airplanes and airports.

- *Flying* by Donald Crews (Greenwillow Books) shows an airplane's flight over cities.
- *Airplane Ride* by Douglas Florian (T.Y. Crowell) shows a pilot flying his plane across the U.S.A.
- *Airplanes* by Byron Barton (T Y Crowell) shows a variety of airplanes and what they do.



IT'S SUPER BUGS!

by Susan Entz

Look! Up in the sky. Is it a bird? A plane? No, it's super bug!

A bird's song or the sight of flying insects may be one of the first signs of springtime. Capitalize on the returning wildlife in your own backyard as winter weather subsides and spring emerges. Bring children the excitement of this flying wildlife through an integrated unit of study focusing on flying insects.

BACKYARD BUG-OUT

Begin the the unit with backyard or playground field trips. Share pictures of bees, butterflies, ladybugs, mosquitoes, and flies, naming each and talking about what they have in common. Ask the class where they might find these animals.

Take an initial exploratory walk through the backyard or a local park or garden to make "bug sightings." Bring the pictures along on the walk to focus the observations. Children will be very excited when they actually see one of their targeted insects!

GROUP TIME

Return to class and read storybooks, share poems, and do fingerplays about the insects that children spotted.

Also share nonfiction books that describe the life of the various insects. Talk about which insects live in colonies and which are independent; their natural habitats; and the process of body changes each insect goes through (metamorphisis).

Later that week, plan another field trip to look for specific bugs. Have children make binoculars to help them focus their attention during the walk. Children can paint two toilet paper rolls and then decorate them with insect stickers. Attach them with tape and add a string to go around the child's neck.

PLAN FOR CLASSROOM "VISITORS"

Discuss with the group what it will take to bring some of these insects back to class. Children will need to catch them, transport them, and then take care of them. Which flying insect will be the easiest to catch? Where can children find it?

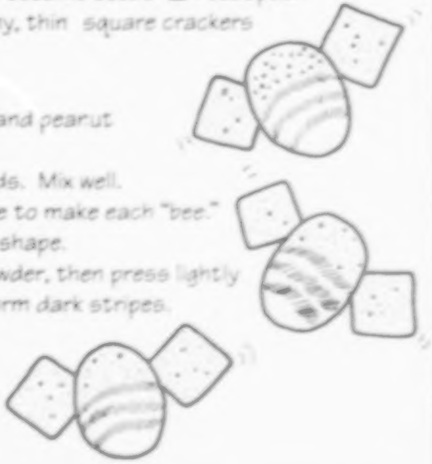
Begin by making milk carton bug catchers. Cut out two sides of the carton and replace with an old nylon stocking. This will provide good ventilation for the insects. Close it with a pinch

BUZZY BEES

You'll Need: 1/2 cup peanut butter ▲1 Tablespoon honey ▲ 1/3 cup dry milk powder ▲ 2 Tablespoons sesame seeds ▲ 1 teaspoon unsweetened cocoa powder ▲ tiny, thin square crackers ▲ toothpicks ▲ bowl

What to Do:

1. In a bowl, mix together honey and peanut butter.
2. Add the milk and sesame seeds. Mix well.
3. Use a teaspoon of the mixture to make each "bee." Roll each ball into an oval bee shape.
4. Dip a toothpick into cocoa powder, then press lightly across top of each "bee" to form dark stripes.
5. Stick in 1 cracker on either side of the "bee" for wings. Chill for 1/2 hour.



from Hands-On Cooking Through the Seasons by Kathy Faggella (First Teacher Press)

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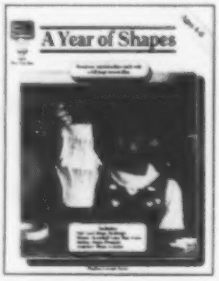

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clip or large paper clip.

The class will also have to plan for a suitable habitat in the classroom for their temporary visitors. Have them help transform an old fish aquarium into a terrarium. Use as many materials (soil, leaves, plant matter) as possible, and be sure to include the food source for the type of insect you catch. Ladybugs, for example, are very fond of aphids, which can be found on leaves and twigs. Add a little dish for water and a plexiglass or cardboard cover.

ANOTHER FIELD TRIP

Go back to the environment to explore again. Look for flying insects and have children focus on how they fly. Ladybugs fly a short distance to get to another leaf, while bees fly a long distance from the hive to find nectar and pollen.

Point out the differences in wing colors, sizes, and shapes of the different insects. Note how small and fragile each insect looks, but how far it can travel.

Catch some "friends" in a milk carton bug catcher. Talk to children about handling the insects gently. Put the insects into the terrarium for a few days of careful observation.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Dramatic Play Make simple insect costumes for dramatic play by cutting out wings from tagboard and wrapping pipe cleaners around a child-sized headband.

Play "The Flight Of The Bumblebee" by Rimsky-Korsakov as background music as little bees fly from their home to the field to collect pollen; then let them buzz around building their hive.

Spread out a "picnic" of plastic foods on a picnic blanket and watch the "flies" dining out.

Let tights and T-shirt clothed caterpillars eat plastic leaves before winding up in a blanket to rest and then emerge with cardboard butterfly wings.

Puppets Make simple stick puppets for each of the insects being studied. Have children draw pictures of the insects, glue them to tagboard, and then tape on ice cream sticks.

Cooking Carry the flying insect theme into snacktime by decorating peach halves with licorice stripes and dried apricot wings to make a bumble bee.

Prepare any meat or spread sandwich and add curly leaf lettuce. Cut it in half diagonally and arrange on the plate to resemble a butterfly with a carrot or celery stick in the middle for the body.

Bug Literacy Make large cut-out books in the shape of the insects being examined. Encourage children to "write" about their experiences or to dictate their words and then add illustrations.

Bug Math Develop matching, sorting, and counting activities that feature insects. Using quantities of plastic bugs from a teacher supply store, have children practice counting and sorting. Let children sort pictures of various insects into flyers and crawlers.

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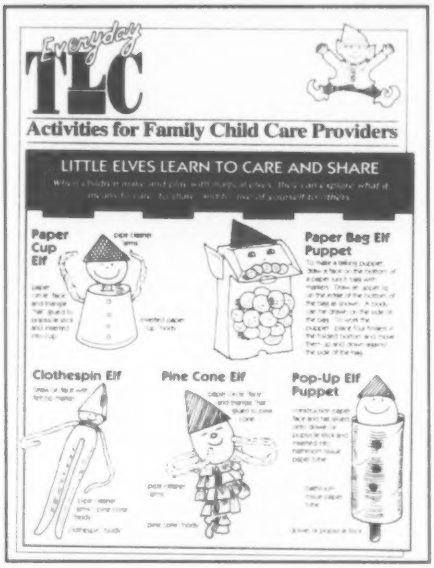

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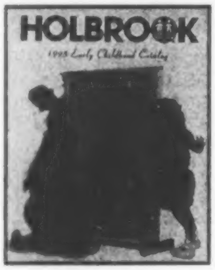

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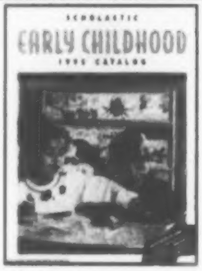

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Simple Models to Make on pages 19-22

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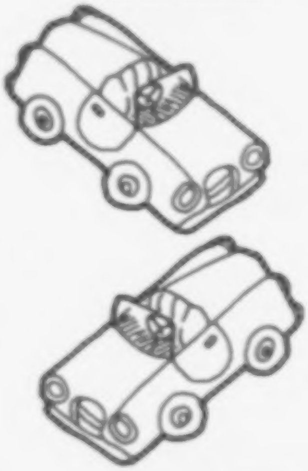
CONTENTS

FEATURES:

Field Trip Tips.......... 5
Visit a Construction Site.......... 8
Take Off for the Airport.......... 9
Children + Museums = Success.......... 10
Travel Tips for Parents.......... 12
Destination Imagination.......... 14
Take a World Tour.......... 16
Making Things That Go.......... 19
A Transportation Card Game.......... 23
The Science of Transportation.......... 24
Motor Mat.......... 26
From Here to There.......... 28
Act It Out.......... 34
Up, Up and Away.......... 35

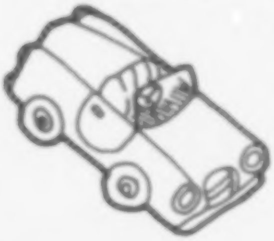


DEPARTMENTS

TODDLER TIME: Traveling with Toddlers.......... 6
HELPFUL HINTS: Get Going with Transportation.......... 18
TRANSPORTATION FUN: Simple Models to Make 19

IN THE BOOK CORNER:

Rails, Roads and Rivers.......... 30
Things that Move.......... 32
Creative Movers.......... 33



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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

by Lisa Lyons Durkin

No matter where you live, the weather should be pleasant at this time of year— so it's a great time to be on the move! Field trips are fabulous; transportation is there to study right outside the front door (or even out the window); and creative movement activities can be done both inside and out. This issue of *First Teacher* is one of our most lively magazines!

We begin with field trip basics—all you need to know to take a successful trip to the park, a museum, the supermarket, the zoo, any place you choose to take your children. Toddler Time looks at traveling with the youngest, and perhaps most challenging group of preschoolers—yes, it can be done!

How about a visit to a construction site? The airport? An art museum? There are suggestions for planning these field trips as well as follow-up activities for back in the classroom. If your program is not designed for venturing into the wide world, Sherry Burrell will show you how to take a field trip without leaving your classroom—destination imagination! And Leanne Grace has each child pack a pretend suitcase every two weeks for a trip around the world.

The reproducible "Tips for Parents" in this issue focuses on traveling with your child—on a short trip to the market or a day long visit to Grandma's. Families will appreciate the suggestions, especially with summer vacations coming up.

Hopefully children will observe many different kinds of transportation on their field trips. You will want to capitalize on the interest this creates with games, art and cooking projects, science experiments, and children's literature. Help children make large and small models of vehicles, including a submarine that really sinks. Make a motor mat that encourages pretend play with toy vehicles. Make tuna and apple boats to enjoy at lunch or snack.

Of course the oldest form of transportation is by foot. And young children need to experiment with the different ways they can move on their feet. So the last topic we address in this issue is creative movement. From basic pantomime to acting out simple stories to combining music and movement to books about dance, you'll find lots of suggestions for getting your children to be creative on their feet.

So join us on the move this spring! Your children's minds will be moving like rockets, up, up, and away as they explore themselves and their world.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Karel Kilmnik teaches first grade in the Philadelphia Public Schools. She writes for her local NAEYC newsletter and is a member of their Peace and Social Justice Committee. As new book reviewer for *First Teacher*, Karel receives review copies of new childrens' literature from many publishers, which she distributes to needy organizations after reading them. Karel is part of the Teacher's Learning Cooperative which is studying children's learning processes in order to create more effective teaching practices.

Sandra Gratias is the Director of Little Lambs Nursery School in Perkasie, PA. where she also teaches four-year-olds. Sandy gives workshops for young children on such topics as self-esteem and Easter. She was also an educational consultant on *StoryWorld*, a teaching through children's literature series for Perfection Learning Corp. At present Sandy is taking a course on writing for children. Her primary consultant is her 13-year old daughter, April.

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FIELD TRIP TIPS

by Mary Beth Spann Minucci

OK— so you've had enough of cozy cold weather indoor play. It's time to step out and shake off the grays of winter. Here is a list of field trip tips.

1 Decide on a site to visit and write or call to make arrangements. Even if you're just planning a trip to the local library or post office, call ahead to make certain your group is welcome, and to ask if someone from the location can give your class a guided tour. Ask also to discover if any educational materials are available which you can use in follow-up sessions and when planning for next year.

2 Prepare a note home informing families of date and time of the upcoming trip. In the note you might include:

- a prepared permission slip for parents to complete allowing their child to go on the trip.
- a rationale for the trip. (*As part of our unit on health, we will be going on a bus trip to visit the local hospital's "Healthy Kids Program."*)
- fee information, if applicable. *(Your child will need to bring in $1.00 the day of the trip.)*
- clothing preferences *(Please have your child wear sneakers and play clothes the day of the trip.)*
- lunch information. *(Please pack a lunch and a drink for your child and place the lunch in a container clearly marked with your child's name.)*
- a request for parental help. *("It would be great if you could accompany us on our trip— please let me know by the tenth if you can make it.")*

3 The day of the trip, remember to:

- remind children of where they are going and talk with them about what they expect to see and do there. You might use a piece of chart pad paper to record their pre-trip expectations and later compare the list with their experiences.
- talk with children about what you expect in the way of behavior. *("When someone is speaking to our group, we must try to listen so that each of us can learn more.")*
- review applicable safe pedestrian and/or safe motor vehicle passenger practices.
- plan to pack a few extra lunches and drinks. (Lunches always are forgotten or lost.) Also, try collecting all the lunches and placing them into a large plastic bag for distribution later. That way, lunches don't get eaten before you've left your building.
- bring a small first aid kit.
- have everyone use the bathroom before you head off.

4 Plan a light transitional activity for when you return. Playground time or a directed movement session works perfectly to calm children.

5 Talk with children about what they learned. Have them draw a picture of their favorite part of the trip. Encourage them to share the trip with their families.

6 Provide trip-inspired props and classroom space for children to act out what they experienced. If you went to the supermarket, clear out one corner of your classroom and fill it with supplies such as a toy grocery cart, paper shopping bags, and clean, empty food containers.

7 Have children help you create a thank-you note to send to your hosts at the field trip site. Record children's thoughts (about what they learned, what they liked, and so on) a large piece of chart paper. Invite children to illustrate the chart before rolling or folding and sending it.

8 File any resource information with other thematic learning center materials or in a file folder labeled FIELD TRIP FUN.

TODDLER TIME

TRAVELING WITH TODDLERS

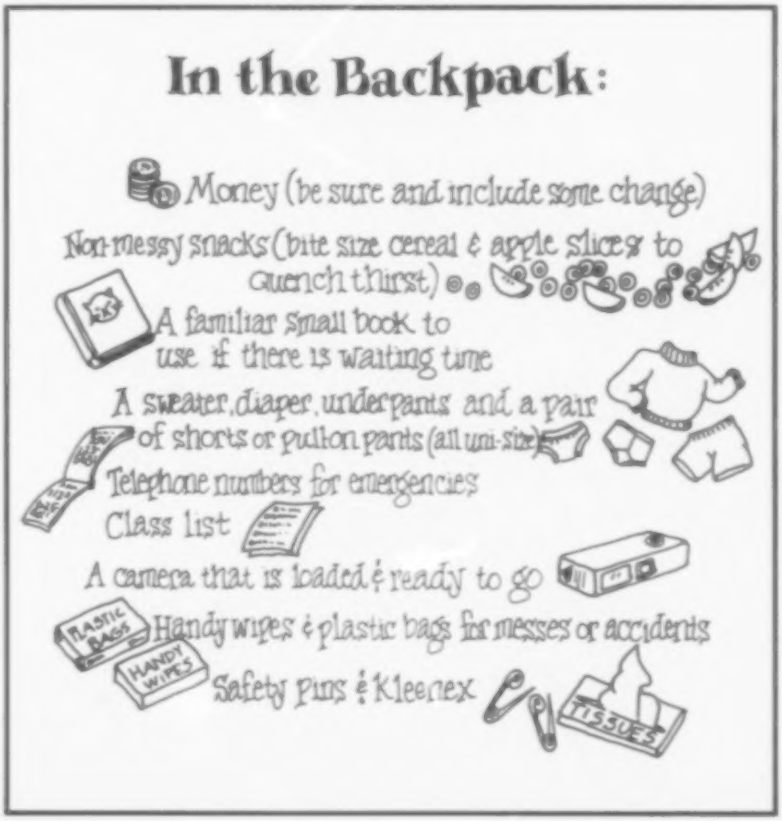
by Jeannine Perez

Field trips with toddlers go smoothly when everything happens as you've planned. Imagine though a worst case field trip scenario; a group of fretful two year olds waiting in an unexpected rainstorm for a city bus which is already 17 minutes late; stressed-out teachers frantically trying to keep children all together and safely contained; parents socializing and unaware of any problems; and volunteers that you couldn't stir with a spoon. The restless children may be crying, wet, or even sick from too much excitement and sweets. You realize that you are going to be late back to the center for lunch, or naps, or going home!

Parents have told me that it's easier to just "stay put and wait for them to grow." While it might be easier to delay field trips until children are older, think of the experiences they (and you) might miss. Preschool experiences are valuable; they add meaning to later learning processes of reading, problem-solving, and an expanding world-view.

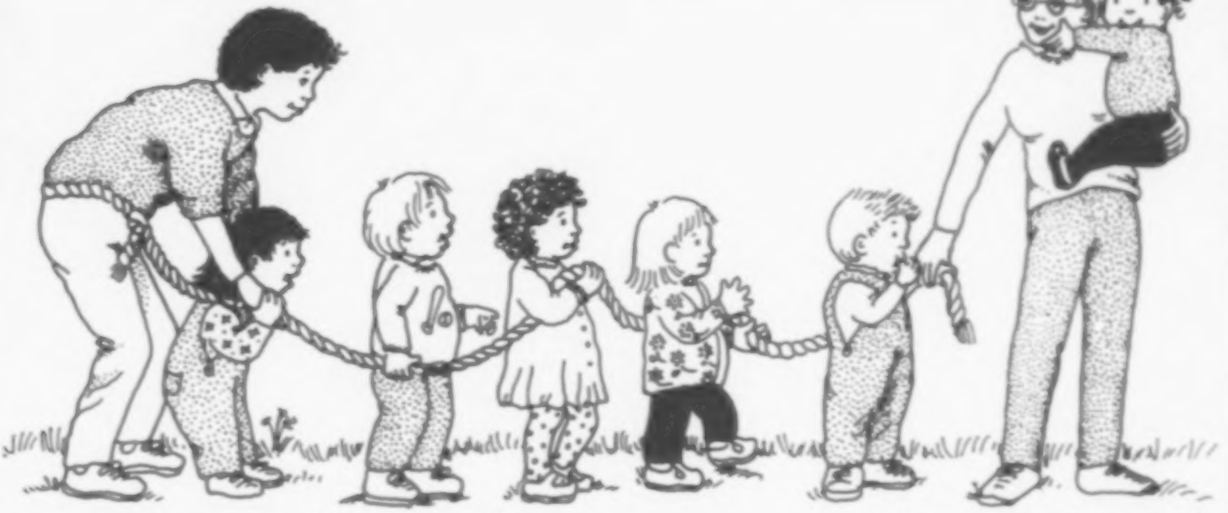
(ALMOST) FAIL-PROOF FIELD TRIPS

- **Plan, plan, plan!** It is easier to do impromptu and exciting things when a basic plan is already in place.
- Prepare children each time you take a walk. Practice. Begin with frequent short outings. Familiarize children with safety rules. Practice following directions and give children an important word that will cause them to stop automatically. Our word is "FREEZE," and we practice using it in games, on walks, and in circle time. It has become a reflex, and gives me confidence whenever we leave the center.
- Pack everything you need in a backpack (so your hands are free). Contents can vary. Make lists like the one below.
- A knotted rope became our lifeline, and it always draws comments because children show such confidence when holding it. Again, we first used it to form lines to go to the playground, to the bathroom; almost everywhere we went.



In the Backpack:

Money (be sure and include some change)
Non-messy snacks (bite size cereal & apple slices to quench thirst)
A familiar small book to use if there is waiting time
A sweater, diaper, underpants and a pair of shorts or pullon pants (all uni-size)
Telephone numbers for emergencies
Class list
A camera that is loaded & ready to go
Handy wipes & plastic bags for messes or accidents
Safety Pins & Kleenex



The rope became a symbol of freedom and security for all of us. Everyone feels that he is holding my hand.

- Have a list of familiar songs on a card in your pocket for unexpected waiting times.

We love to sing "The Wheels on the Bus." We make up our own verses and our own words about the current destination and what we plan to do. Or sing your own song to the tune of "A Hunting We Will Go"

To the park we go.
To the park we go.
We'll walk and ride, and eat,
and play until it's time to go.

- Check your transportation: cost, time schedules, seat belts, and rules about eating snacks while riding.
- Do your paperwork. Send permission slips home to parents detailing what, when, where, and things to bring. Be sure that your director knows your destination and a schedule also. Notify the cook if there is a possibility of a delay in returning. Prepare name tags for each child that include a phone number.
- Assign volunteers and helpers to specific children. The buddy system works well; two parents or helpers with two toddlers is ideal, but two adults with three or four children also works. If you have enough help, you will be free to supervise the entire group.
- Be flexible. Realize that even the best laid plans do not encompass all possibilities. Be ready to change plans, adapt, and enjoy any adventures that happen. Learn with your children.
- Check the weather report!
- You may find it worthwhile to take a "dry run" to check the route and the destination. Look for busy intersections and other hazards, distracting noise, curbs that are not cut-aways. Check time requirements, costs you may not have expected, and accessibility if you have children with special needs.
- Remember that "less is more." Keep trips short, and schedule them at a time when children are not sleepy or hungry. Remember that too much stimulation and excitement make group control difficult.
- Begin your outing with a feeling of anticipation. This is going to be fun! Your own attitude greatly affects the success of the field trip.

AFTER THE TRIP

Wrap up your adventure during circle time. Talk about what you've seen and heard. Take turns telling about the best and the funniest parts of the trip. Write an experience chart and glue pictures children draw to the chart. Mount it on a wall to share with parents.

Write thank-you notes to everyone who helped make the trip a success. Include parents, friendly guides, and helpful bus drivers. Give children copies of photos you took or stickers.

Brainstorm with all participants for ideas for the next field trip! The best time to plan is when the day is fresh in your memory. Encourage children and parents to help you plan future trips.

Don't forget to pat yourself on the back for an important job well done, and then relax!

VISIT A CONSTRUCTION SITE

by Tania Cowling

Everyone stops to watch a giant crane at work on a city construction site. There is usually a collection of machinery and materials assembled there. What a great field trip for observation and exploration!

Before your trip, read the book *Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel* by Virginia L. Burton (Houghton Mifflin). Talk about the excavation (digging) in the story and the types of machines used today (tractors, backhoes.)

As you take your walk, try to observe the various phases of construction such as the pouring of a foundation, buildings being framed, roof and rafter beams being raised, pipes being laid, and wires connected. Notice the work that various people do. Construction workers are community helpers. There are jobs such as labor inspectors, administrators, and machine operators, just to name a few.

After your field trip, try a few of these fun learning activities in your classroom.

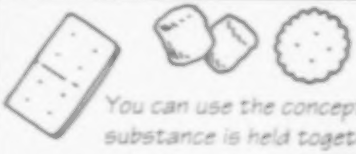
Sand Box Site Make your sandbox into a construction site. Use toy steam shovel trucks for excavation or regular plastic shovels. Fill dump trucks with sand to haul over to a different area of the box. Use rocks, stones, wood, cardboard, and toy blocks for the actual building.

Community Helper Booklet Talk about all the jobs that are part of a construction crew. Occupations may include architects, engineers, carpenters, bricklayers (masons), plumbers, electricians, sheetmetal workers, and painters. Draw pictures for this booklet or use builder's supply catalogs to cut out pictures.

Construction Painting Bring out paint rollers and pans. Either fill these with water and paint outdoor surfaces or use tempera paint to roller paint on a large paper mural.

Geometric Shapes Cut circles, squares, rectangles, and triangles of different sizes out of paper, wallpaper, or fabric. Glue these onto construction paper to make pictures of buildings.

Wood Construction Onto a block of wood, help children construct buildings made from wooden scraps. Give them spools, dowels, clothespins, various scraps, etc. Rub any rough edges with sandpaper. Let children paint their constructions with tempera or acrylic paints.



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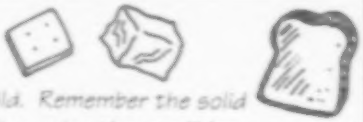
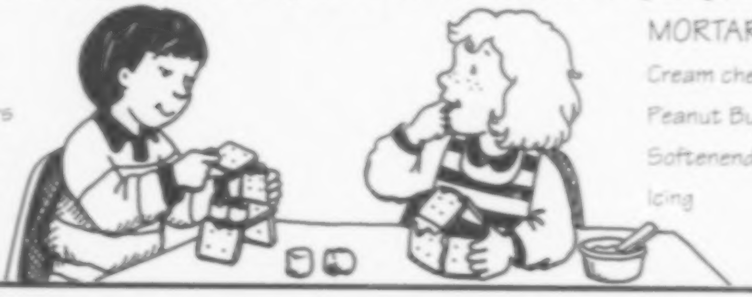


You can use the concept of blocks and mortar using these foods to build. Remember the solid substance is held together by the sticky substance. Construct a building using these edibles:

BLOCKS	MORTAR
Crackers	Cream cheese
Graham Crackers	Peanut Butter
Toast Squares	Softenend Cheese Spread
Jello Squares	Icing
Marshmallows	



TAKE OFF FOR THE AIRPORT

by Sandra Gratias

Airplanes are fascinating to young children, so why not consider a visit to an airport? If you don't live near a large airport, there may be a small commercial airfield nearby. A helioport is wonderful to see and so is a hot air balloon festival. Even a small crop dusting company will be valuable for getting a close-up view of an airplane.

BEFORE THE FIELD TRIP

Before you go on the trip, do some activities in preparation. Ask children and parents who have been on airplane trips to bring in pictures and tell about their experiences. Collect pictures of planes, balloons, helicopters, and gliders to show. Invite children to bring in toy airplanes and related books. As you talk and play, build vocabulary with words such as *wing, fuselage, tail, cockpit, landing gear, engine, jet, runway, pilot, flight attendant, passenger, luggage, terminal, control tower, taxi, land,* and *takeoff.* Explain that helicopters can fly up, down, and to all sides and hover, which airplanes can't do. Talk about gliders which are towed up and set free and have no engines; and hot air balloons which cannot be steered. Tell what parachutes are for. Make one. Fold and decorate paper airplanes and helicopters.

Talk about how you plan for a long trip. From a small suitcase, take out a few things you might need: toothbrush, hairbrush, toothpaste, clock, stuffed animal, slippers... Let children study them, then close their eyes while you pack a few. Which items did you take away?

Pack an imaginary suitcase. Start by naming something to pack. The next person must repeat that and add another thing. The third person repeats both and adds another, and so on, until someone forgets something. Then start over.

Say you are packing a suitcase with things that begin with "B" (or some other letter). Each person names something. (Items can be silly.) Keep going around until you run out of words; then pick another letter.

Either before or after the visit to the airport, role play airplane trips. Set up chairs in rows and let the pilot wear headphones. Give children chances to be flight attendants and pass out cups and food.

AT THE AIRPORT

When you visit the airport, make sure you have lots of adult help. Airports are usually crowded and busy and it is a bit difficult to keep an eye on a lot of children. Have them use the buddy system and wear school identification tags. If possible, have each child bring money to buy a snack at the snack bar—a real treat! In some airports, the snack bars are located where you can watch the planes as you eat. While at the airport, be sure to look for these interesting items: metal detectors, the baggage claim area, people in uniforms, control tower, conveyer belts loading baggage, baggage carts and trucks, and fold up or roll away stairs or gangways. Some trucks that deliver meals to the planes even have a system for raising the truck body to plane door level. Make sure children are prepared for the size of commercial planes and for the loud noises they make.

AFTER THE TRIP

After the visit, have children relate what they saw as you write it down to create an experience story they can hear over and over. You can even run off copies to assemble with their pictures as a booklet to remember the exciting event. Now, you're all cleared for takeoff. Have a wonderful trip!

CHILDREN + MUSEUMS = SUCCESS!

by Barbara F. Backer

Taking children to a museum can be a wonderful educational experience or a disaster. There are so many things to see, and children are easily over-stimulated. Planning ahead is a big factor in the success of your trip.

Keep in mind that children learn through their senses and through direct experiences with their world. Fortunately, active learning is "hot" in many museums today! They emphasize learning about various cultures through interaction with that culture's arts and everyday objects. For example, at a historic plantation in the south, children experience plantation life by grinding corn, weaving at a loom, dying fabric with indigo dye, and milking a cow.

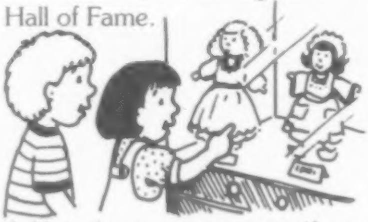
Art museums offer interactive experiences as well. While learning about body parts, children can look at a variety of portraits and discuss the shapes of the eyes, noses, and faces they see. They compare a portrait of a full face with a side view of another. Then each child can be given a mirror, paper, and markers. Children can study the shapes in their own faces and then draw self portraits.

Other children in the art museum can play "mirror" games, assuming the position of people they see in the paintings. They can tell stories about the pictures, imagining where the people are, what happened just before the picture, and what might happen next.

PLANNING YOUR TRIP

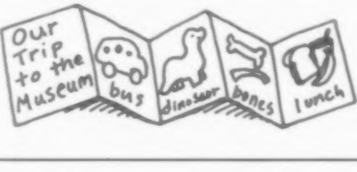
To ensure a successful museum visit, follow these tips:

- Plan ahead. Look through the phone book early in the school year for museums in your area. Don't overlook the unusual—the doll museum, antique car museum, the fire fighter's Hall of Fame.



- Visit the museum yourself or talk with the education director to learn what exhibits will interest young children. Plan your curriculum and your visit around that.
- If the museum has nothing to interest young children or if they expect children to stand in front of one display or painting after another listening to an adult talk, DON'T GO THERE! Everyone will be unhappy.
- Remember that children are active learners. Keep them on the move, and whenever possible, provide hands-on experiences for learning.
- Consider children's short attention spans and their ability to quickly become over-stimulated. Don't try to see everything in one day. It's best to have a great thirty-minute experience that leaves everyone wanting to come back again.
- Bring a souvenir back to class to stimulate discussion of the trip. Picture postcards of the exhibits you saw are an inexpensive and durable choice. Museum guide books are often available, as well. If you can afford them, instant developing photos are another favorite.
- Plan follow-up activities for when you return to class. Some children may dictate chart stories. Others may draw pictures of their trip, dictate their memories, and gather the pictures into a class-made book. Others may post photos, child-drawn pictures, and dictated memories on a bulletin board to share with parents and other classroom visitors.

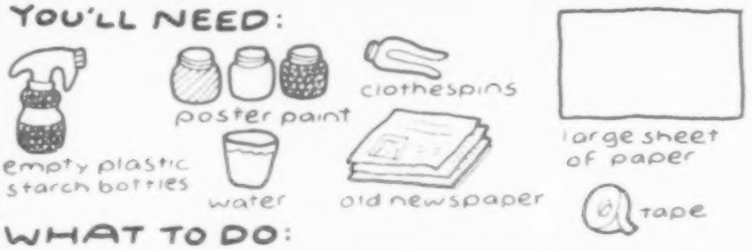
If you have visited an art museum and seen modern paintings you might want to try the activities on the following page with children for some colorful modern art-making.

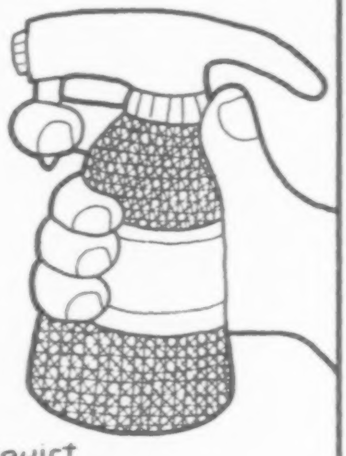


MODERN ART MAKING

SQUEEZE BOTTLE PAINTING

YOU'LL NEED:


empty plastic starch bottles
poster paint
clothespins
water
old newspaper
large sheet of paper
tape



WHAT TO DO:

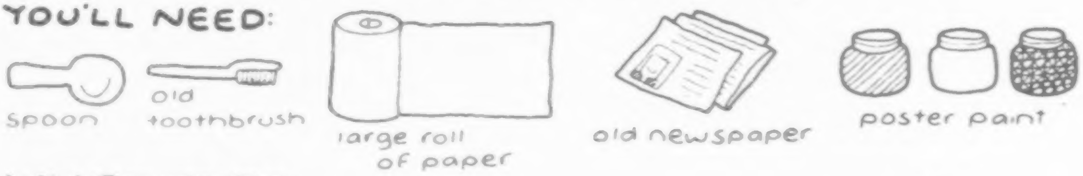
1. Fill each plastic starch bottle with 1 color of poster paint which has been thinned with water so it squirts out easily.

2. Clothespin a large sheet of paper to a fence (or tape to a newspaper-covered wall) Have child stand back about 3' and squirt paint onto paper. It sprays, it drips, it blends colors!

SPATTER PAINTING

AND DRIP PAINTING

YOU'LL NEED:

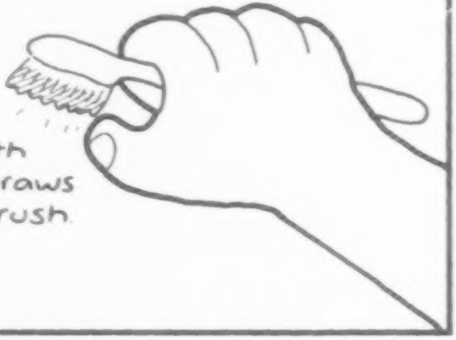

spoon
old toothbrush
large roll of paper
old newspaper
poster paint

WHAT TO DO:

1. Roll out a long strip of paper on newspaper-covered floor.

2. Use toothbrush to spatter paint around paper. Child loads brush with paint, holds it out over paper and draws his thumb across bristles of the brush.

3. Have child dip spoon into paint and dribble paint across paper.



Idea by Kathy Faggella

ICE CREAM
FLORIST
BAKERY
PIZZA
THEATRE
NOW PLAYING
LIBRARY

TRAVEL TIPS FOR PARENTS

by Susan M. Root

Whether you are traveling to the local grocery store or across the state to visit relatives, your trip with children will go much more smoothly if you plan ahead. It is important to prepare children before you leave. Even if your child is only an infant or toddler, it is helpful to tell her where you are going and what you might see along the way. Older children can begin to look forward to events as you discuss them ahead of time.

Even if your trip is a very short one, it's a good idea to carry a "sanity" bag. What child hasn't developed a tremendous thirst the moment the car engine is turned on? Prepare a small travel bag with a sipper bottle or cup filled with water, a small snack bag such as dry cereal and raisins, and a book or toy. If your trip will be longer, then you will need a variety of snacks and small toys. A small plastic basket can be kept in the car with special games, toys, and books. You might want to consider keeping a "hip pouch" in your car with a few small toys in it. It works well to secure a child into a shopping cart and also provides something for her to do while you are shopping.

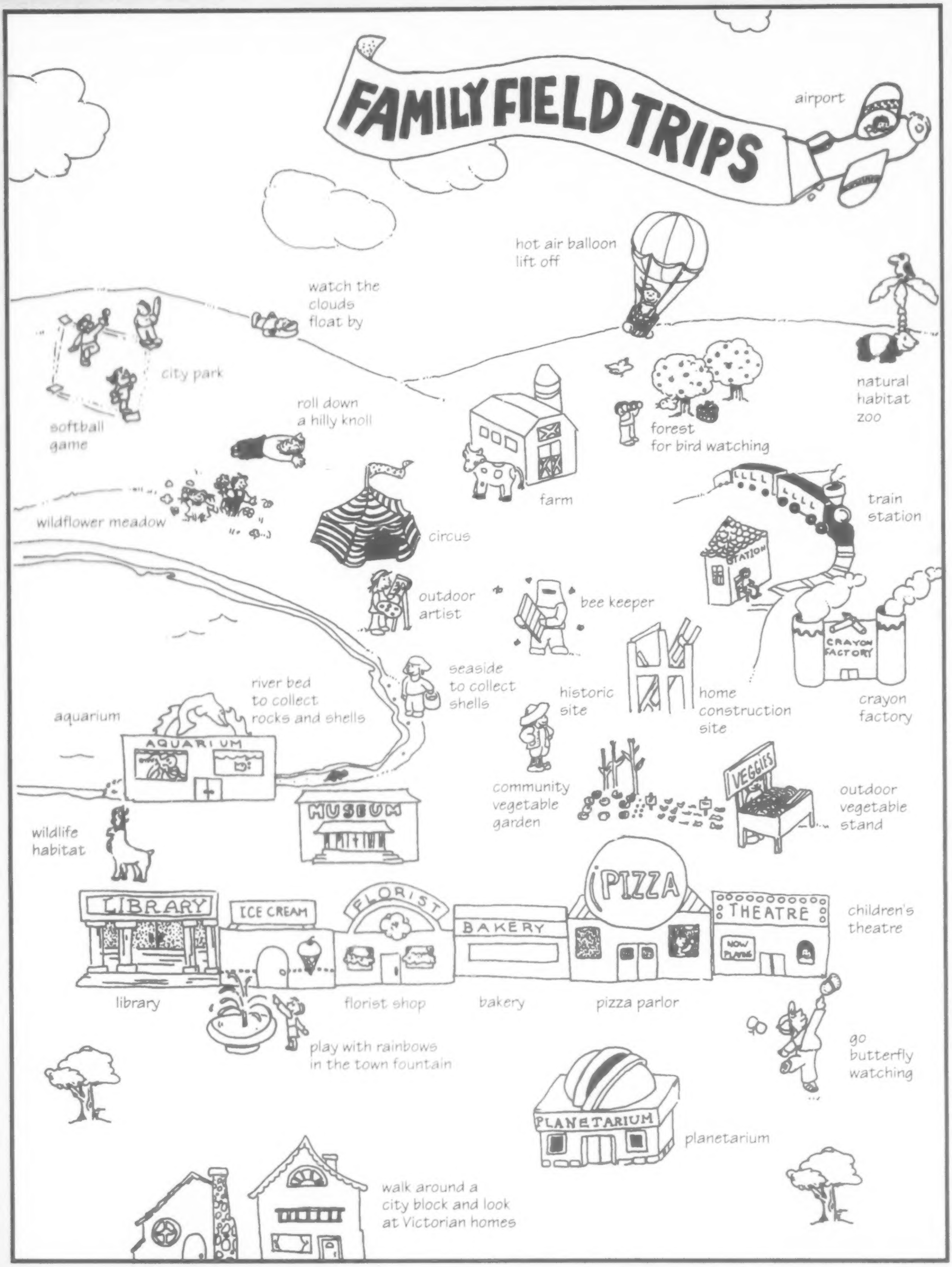
Your activities in the car will depend on the age of your child(ren). Safety comes first so everyone should be securely fastened in seat belts or car seats and unbuckled only at rest stops.

- For infants and toddlers, tapes of children's music and your own singing will provide good entertainment. As children grow, they can join in the singing. Family favorites include "Old MacDonald's Farm," "BINGO," "The Wheels on the Bus," "If You're Happy," and "Five Little Ducks."
- "I Spy (out the window or in the car)" games can be invented depending on your child's skill level. You might look for colors, shapes, or letters.
- Counting how many red cars or how many cars contain children are other ideas to keep children looking out the window.
- Small tablets and a washable marker or pencil can keep children busy as they draw or write. A "magic slate" and Magna-Doodle are other ways for children to draw or write.

As you near your destination, briefly review where you are going and what you are going to do. A short reminder of expected behavior will also help children. For example, you might say, "*Remember, Julie, we are just going to get a few things at that store today. You can help me look for the lettuce and apples. When we get to the checkout counter, I will ask the clerk to let you carry the bag of apples to the car.*" Or, "*When we get to Grandma's, you can give her a big hug and show her the boo-boo on your knee. Do you remember where Grandma keeps those special toys for you? I'll help you find that Mickey Mouse puzzle you like and you can put it together while Grandma and I talk.*" In this way, children have specific things to do and a clear understanding of the behavior you expect. If they begin to whine or cry, you can remind them of what you talked about.

Getting ready to go home can be difficult especially if children are tired. It helps children to prepare if you give them a warning that they will soon be leaving. When visiting friends and relatives, you can help your child pick up toys and gather her belongings. Talk about what you will do in the car and what you will do when you get home. Acknowledge her feelings by saying something such as, "*I know you would like to play with David a little longer, but we need to go now. I will make plans for David to come visit us next week.*"

Preparation is the key to traveling with children. Talking things through helps children know what to expect and helps them deal with changes and new situations.


FAMILY FIELD TRIPS
airport
hot air balloon lift off
watch the clouds float by
city park
softball game
roll down a hilly knoll
natural habitat zoo
forest for bird watching
farm
wildflower meadow
circus
train station
STATION
outdoor artist
bee keeper
CRAYON FACTORY
seaside to collect shells
historic site
home construction site
crayon factory
river bed to collect rocks and shells
aquarium
AQUARIUM
VEGGIES
community vegetable garden
outdoor vegetable stand
MUSEUM
wildlife habitat
LIBRARY
ICE CREAM
FLORIST
BAKERY
PIZZA
THEATRE
NOW PLAYING
children's theatre
library
florist shop
bakery
pizza parlor
play with rainbows in the town fountain
go butterfly watching
PLANETARIUM
planetarium
walk around a city block and look at Victorian homes

DESTINATION IMAGINATION

by Sherry Burrell

Children love field trips, but sometimes they can be difficult to get off the ground (or out the door). When it looks like a real field trip is not possible, consider an imaginary field trip to DESTINATION IMAGINATION.

Young children are so skillful at creating a web of fantasy for themselves, that an imaginary trip can be just as exciting as a real one! No matter what the current classroom theme, a trip into the world of fantasy can extend and enrich the concepts of your curriculum.

CHOOSING A DESTINATION

When you plan a real field trip, your choices are almost automatically limited by resources, distance, cost, transportation, chaperones, availability, and red tape. Not so with an imaginary one! The success of Joanna Cole's *Magic School Bus* (Scholastic) series of books indicates what a wonderful tool an imaginary field trip can be. While many of her books can be difficult reading for a group of young children, the topics and information included can be a great resource for any teacher who wants to plan an imaginary trip. When T*he Magic School Bus* visits inside the earth, goes inside the human body, gets lost in the solar system, gets baked in a cake, or kicks up a storm, you can easily see what concepts to present to children for each topic. By reading the books in this excellent series, you will automatically get destination ideas and you become excited of what an imaginary journey could become.

Another great way to choose a destination is to stretch the thematic units already in your curriculum into journey ideas. If you are teaching colors, plan a trip through a rainbow, into a kaleidoscope, or into a field of giant flowers. Imagine your classroom turning into "Planet Purple" (from a Mr. Roger's Neighborhood character), or entering the pages of Bill Martin Jr.'s *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* (Holt, Rinehart, & Winston) Your room could be filled with giant child-created posters of the various characters in the book, or children could add their own. Children could take a walk (or have a parade) as they recite the rhythm of the words together or they might choose to create another form of transportation for themselves!

Finally, there are no better imaginary destinations than the ones that come from children themselves. Listen and follow children. Your class will be transported below the streets into the sewer system, into other galaxies, into an ant hole, into a toy store, or simply onto an airplane for a quick ride. Wherever you go, follow your children, and you're on your way!

PLANNING THE TRIP

Once you decide where you're going, you enter the planning phase. Sometimes this phase takes two to three minutes, as in the case of an impromptu line of chairs that is suddenly transformed into a train. At other times, the planning is more carefully considered, especially when the trip is a culminating activity for a specific unit. The planning will involve children's ideas, since this is their field trip.

As the final field trip for a space/astronaut unit, our class planned a trip to "Penny Planet." We had done many activities related to outer space and the jobs of astronauts, and we were just introducing the letter "Pp" at the same time. We had talked a lot about planets already, and had listened to an audio tape of the story of "Planet Purple," so we had a good foundation for the discovery of this new imaginary place. We began by brainstorming "Pp" words (*pumpkins, peas, pretty, pasta, pickles, poor, pennies, purple, pillows, pandas, pencils,* etc.). Next we

looked at which of the words we'd come up with were things we could use to create other things with. We got rid of things that we could not get many of, things that would rot quickly, and words that did not represent "things" (nouns). We were left with *pasta, pennies, and pencils*. Of these three, we decided that by collecting pennies, we could combine our enjoyment with a service unit on helping the homeless. Our destination became "Penny Planet." Children decided that since this was a planet, we would need a spaceship to travel in. When we arrived, we would see penny people (aliens), penny houses, penny cars, etc. Children explored all the things that they could create with pennies, and our direction was set.

TAKING THE TRIP

As with most activities designed for young children, a good deal of the imaginary field trip is in the process of creating it. Parents sent in lots of pennies for us to use. Pennies arrived wrappers, bags, jars, cans, and even socks. Children spent the whole next week designing and constructing penny creations. We used foam, cardboard, and clay as bases for our constructions. We drew outlines of all sizes of pretend "pennies." Our room was transformed into "Penny Planet" in no time at all.

Soon we were ready to take our trip. The children divided into two groups, the visitors from Earth and the "penny aliens." The visitors from Earth piled into our spaceship five at a time (we used the shuttle method), gave countdowns, sang "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" (with the word *diamond* changed to *penny*), and emerged to meet the penny aliens. They wore penny necklaces (pennies stuck onto strips of masking tape), penny bracelets, penny crowns, and even penny vests. They had pennies stuck in their shoes, pennies as hair decorations, and they carried their "Penny Planet" flag. Fortunately, they were friendly. They gave a tour of their planet to the visitors, fed them chocolate penny snacks, and gave them a tearful/cheerful penny good-bye. Then the groups switched places and we did it all over again. Believe me, we teachers tire of these fantasies long before children do; so have patience!

After the dramatic play, we collected all the pennies, sorted them in groups of ten, counted the groups in egg carton sections, and then donated the money to the local shelter for the homeless. A lot of people benefited from our imaginary trip!

REAPING THE REWARDS

A trip to any DESTINATION IMAGINATION location will undoubtedly reap many rewards for you and your children. When children become the key players in creating the experience, their imaginations work together to create what none would have been able to create alone. Their ideas piggyback on one another, and they learn to cooperate, adjust to another's slant on things, and become richer in the exchange. If you skillfully follow the process, you can quietly add concepts children are already learning. As the trip unfolds, children are counting, using letters of the alphabet, walking on shapes, noticing colors, talking about similarities and differences, using new vocabulary words, and, having the fun of cooperative exploration!

TAKE A WORLD TOUR

by Leanne D. Grace

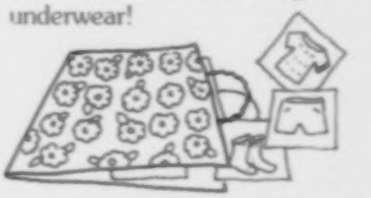
In many ways we are all alike...that's what children learned in our "trip around the world." We began the year by learning about ourselves and our families. During autumn harvest, children sampled and prepared foods. Modes of transportation and simple science experiments involving air, water, and wheels were performed. A visit from a flight attendant culminated our study of how things move. We set up our chairs to simulate an airplane cabin and enjoyed snacks on trays.

Now we were ready to take off...the children themselves decided which countries to visit:

- Mexico to follow our monarch butterfly that migrated south.
- China to celebrate Chinese New Year.
- Norway where we viewed the Olympics.
- Australia (to visit Kookaburra from our favorite song).

- Africa, England, France, South America, and New York City to visit the birthplaces of family members.

Each "trip" lasted about two weeks. Children planned how we would travel by looking at the globe. "Travel days" consisted of extended science experiments with either air, water, or wheels; making luggage; and packing clothes. Luggage was a folded piece of wallpaper from a sample book and clothes were cut from catalogs. Children were shown pictures of the area we were visiting and decided if warm or cool clothes were needed, shoes or boots—don't forget underwear!

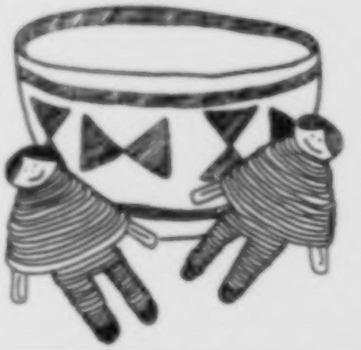


Countries were researched for foods, games, toys, songs, and stories. "Artifacts" were collected and displayed. These included money (pesos/Mexico), games (tangram/China, chess/Russia), dolls (Worry/S. America, Matrushka/Russia), clothes, dishes, postcards, stamps... Parents became a wealth of information, as well as a visit to the library.

Simple changes involving fabric, foods, clothes, and hats were made to the dramatic play area for each country. For example, Mexico—plastic fruits and vegetables, weaving; Russia — fake furs, gloves, scarves.

The folktales and stories (found in the 398.2 section of the library) shared from each country became the basis of our language arts and expressive arts—puppets, masks, and headbands led to creative dramatics and story retelling.

Art projects included paper mache calabash bowls from Africa, clothespin Worry dolls, painting in colors of the flags from each country. *The Kids' Multicultural Art Book* by A. Terzian (Williamson Publishing) was a valuable resource.



Recipes from Around the World

by Kathy Faggella

Fruktsopa

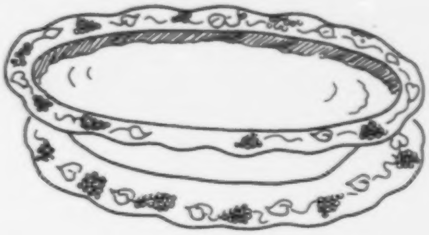
NORWEIGAN FRUIT SOUP

You'll Need:

1 Lb. pitted prunes ▲ 1/2 lb. raisins ▲ 1 cup dried apricots ▲ 2 cinnamon sticks ▲ 1 can unsweetened cherries and juice ▲ 3 Tblsp. tapioca ▲ 6 cups water ▲ 1/4 cup sugar ▲ optional: slices of orange and lemon

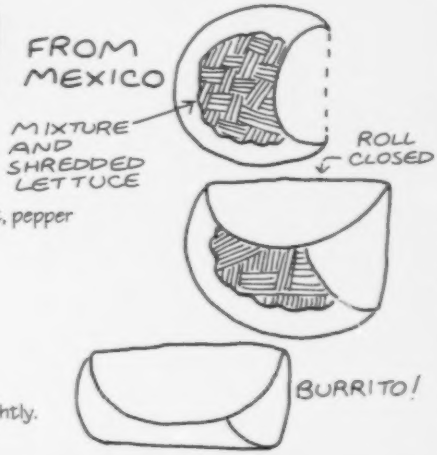
What to Do:

1. Simmer dried fruits and cinnamon sticks in water in large kettle until fruit is soft (about 30 minutes.
2. Drain cherries and add to liquid that has been poured off of cooked fruit.
3. Add tapioca and sugar to cherries and liquid. Simmer for about 30 minutes stirring often until tapioca is clear and mixture is thick.
4. Add thicked juice and cherries to cooked fruit.
5. Orange and lemon slices can be added to the soup for color.



Burritos

FROM MEXICO



You'll Need:

4 flour tortillas ▲ 1 small can refried beans ▲ 1 cup —American, chedder, longhorn cheese ▲ 1 Tblsp oil ▲ 1 small greer pepper ▲ 1 small onion ▲ shredded lettuce ▲ Optional: 1/2 lb. hamburger ▲ Optional: chili powder, salt, pepper

What to Do:

1. Cut onion, pepper, and cheese into small pieces.
2. Saute onions, pepper, and meat (optional) in oil until limp.
3. Add refried beans until heated through.
4. Add cheese until it melts.
5. You can add a sprinkle of spices.
6. Heat tortillas in a dry, hot skilletmfor about 20 seconds or until browned slightly.
7. Fill tortilla with mixture and lettuce and wrap. (See drawing.)

We followed recipes from the countries visited. We wanted to try typical dishes from each place.

Children documented their travels with a "passport" (old maps were laminated and covered a few stapled blank pages). Photos of children were glued to the covers and each page was dated (library date stamper) upon our arrival and departure. Children drew or wrote something they remembered about our visit.

When planning a "travel" program, beware of perpetuating stereotypes and the "glamour" of other cultures. At all times, try to focus on everyday aspects of cultures and how families live, eat, and play. Among the wonderful resources we discovered were the Ann Morris books *Loving, Bread, Bread, Bread, On the Go, Hats, Hats, Hats* (Lothrup, Lee, and Shepard). These books feature wonderful photographs of people all over the world. A bit outdated but useful series is *Families Around the World*, published by Wayland Pub. Limited.

We live in a predominantly homogeneous community, so my goal is to expose children to differences and dispell bias and fear preparing for their future.

HELPFUL HINTS

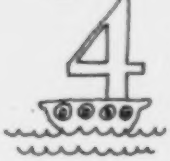
GET GOING WITH TRANSPORTATION

by Gail P. Jones

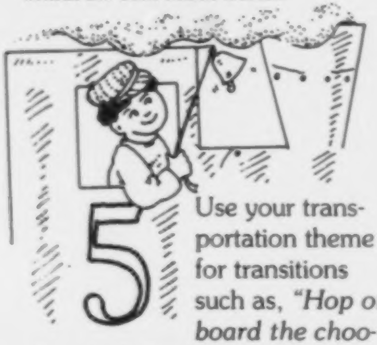
Transportation is a great theme to incorporate throughout your room and curriculum! For example: the dramatic play area may be a *travel agency* or an *airport!* Reading may be done in the *reading station* and the water table may be renamed *The Harbor*!

By putting traffic signs throughout the room, children learn words, follow directions, and have fun! The stop sign on the door or indoor slide becomes a real safety sign as well. "Yielding" or going "Slow" in a high traffic area will also keep children safe. Let children make the signs.

Provide small plastic fruit baskets for bridges, cardboard tubes for tunnels and ramps, round flat cans for "traffic circles," and boxes for garages and parking lots in the cars/block area. Combining small motor items like string for cables, also encourages a lot of creative thinking!

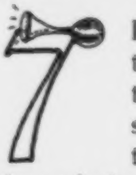


Try a hands-on bulletin board with land, sea, air, and outer space pockets in which children place pictures of appropriate vehicles. They can find the pictures in magazines, cut them out, and mount them on construction paper. Older children can label them.



Use your transportation theme for transitions such as, *"Hop on board the choo-choo train"* going to music, *"Row your boat"* to the tables; *"Get on your pony and trot"* to the door, etc. You can encourage thinking skills and calm walking down the hall with such things as, *"Pretend you are a sailboat gliding on the sea."*

"Helpers" might get child-created license plates using their initials and the number on their house or rest mat. Place the chore on the front or back end of a vehicle and add the 'licensed' worker! Let each child make a small vehicle to "park" in the empty "Parking Lot" as they arrive at school for instant attendance and lunch counts!



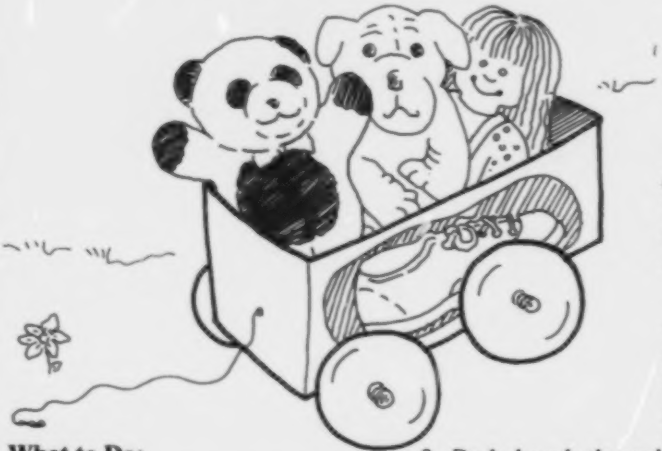
Put transportation vehicles in the math and science centers to classify by numbers of wheels, shapes, colors and how they work. Look for different attributes to create "sets" everyday. Include musical instruments in the music center for creating sounds of all vehicles used and plenty of records and tapes of all the favorite transportation songs and music available.

Transportation is truly a great way to "get going!"

MAKING THINGS THAT GO

by Kathy Faggella

Children love to make things that will really move when pulled or pushed. Here are some models, both large and small, that will bring hours of pleasure and learning!



WAGON

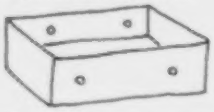
This wagon is very versatile. It can be used to carry stuffed toys or it can be a pretend farm wagon, flower cart, or moving wagon.

You'll Need:
- ◆ one shoebox
- ◆ four plastic lids (same size, as from tennis can or potato chip can)
- ◆ two 10-to-12 inch 1/4 inch dowels
- ◆ eight elastic bands
- ◆ one string
- ◆ scissors

What to Do:

1. Poke one hole through the center of each lid. Make it slightly larger than 1/4 inch dowel.

2. Poke four holes into box as shown.

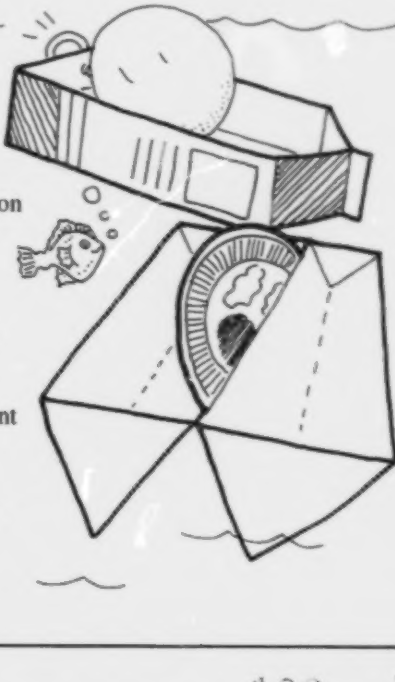


3. Push dowels through back and front holes. Wrap each of the four ends sticking out of the box with an elastic band.

4. Put a lid on each dowel end. Wrap an elastic band around the end of each dowel piece.

5. Poke hole through front of box. Place string through it and tie a large knot to hold in box.

Variation: Use only two lid wheels and only one dowel.



BALLOON BOAT

You'll Need:
- ◆ one half gallon paper milk carton
- ◆ one balloon
- ◆ knife (ADULT USE ONLY)

What to Do:

1. Use knife to cut carton in half lengthwise.

2. Poke a hole in center back of "boat." (Pointed carton top is front or bow of boat.)

3. Blow up balloon. Stick neck through hole, while balloon rests inside carton.

4. Let go of balloon. Boat will move forward as air is expelled from balloon.

MILK CARTON CATAMARAN

You'll Need:
- ◆ one half gallon milk container
- ◆ scissors
- ◆ paper plate

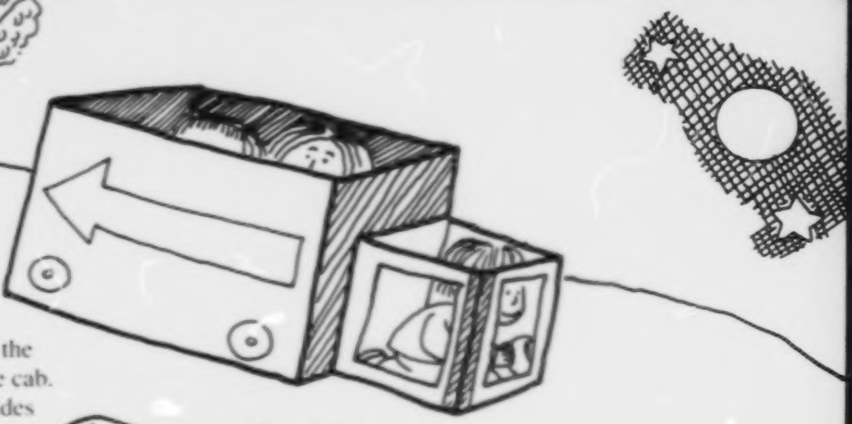
What to Do:

1. Use scissors to slice through three sides of a milk container, so you've made a diagonal cut across bottom, up one side, and diagonally across top.

2. Open carton for catamaran.

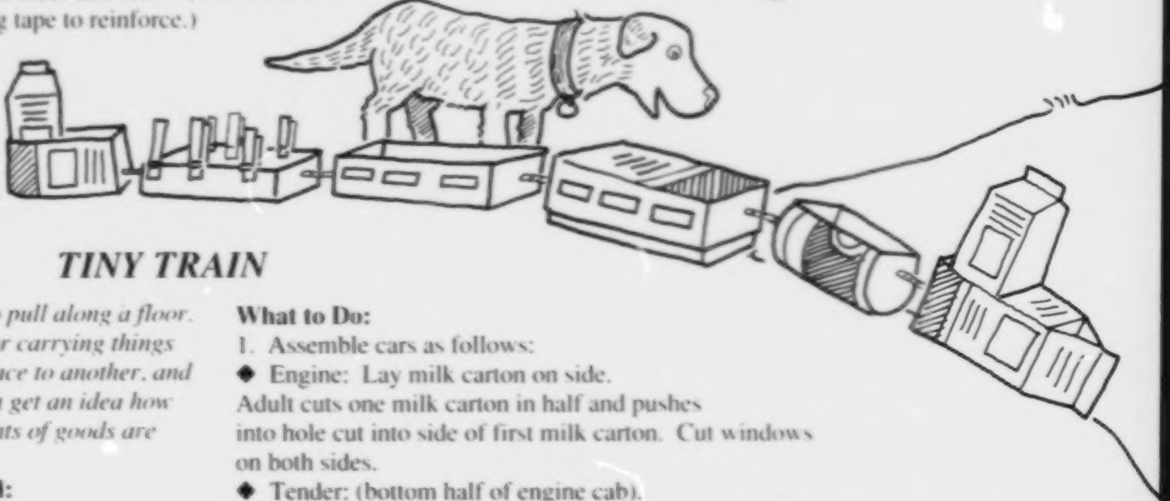
3. Make a slot, halfway down the folded section of carton and insert paper plate as a sail. Decorate plate.

4. Place in water to sail.



CHILD-SIZE PICK-UP TRUCK

A refrigerator carton, on its side, also makes a pick-up truck. Add another box to the front and fold down the top side to make the cab. Cut away two sides and back. (Cover cut sides with masking tape to reinforce.)



TINY TRAIN

Make this to pull along a floor. It is great for carrying things from one place to another, and children can get an idea how large amounts of goods are carried.

You'll Need:

- craft knife
- scissors
- sticks
- two oatmeal cartons (round)
- eight half gallon milk cartons
- six "snap" clothespins
- string

What to Do:

1. Assemble cars as follows:

◆ Engine: Lay milk carton on side. Adult cuts one milk carton in half and pushes into hole cut into side of first milk carton. Cut windows on both sides.

◆ Tender: (bottom half of engine cab).

◆ Tank Cars: Adult cuts sections of side of oatmeal box out.

◆ Coach: Adult cuts two milk containers so that peaked top is off. Slip one carton inside the other. Cut out windows on both sides.

◆ Gondola: Assemble as for coach, but cut open one entire side.

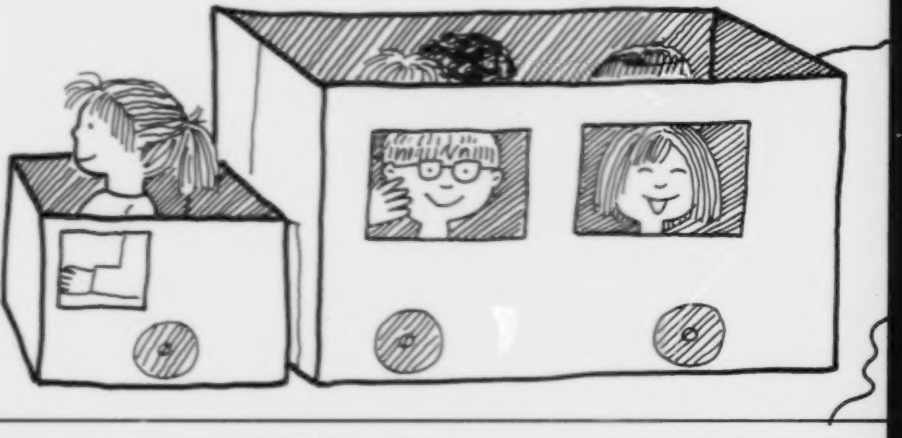
◆ Flat Car: Assemble as for coach. Cut down all sides to 2 inches and place three snap clothespins on each side.

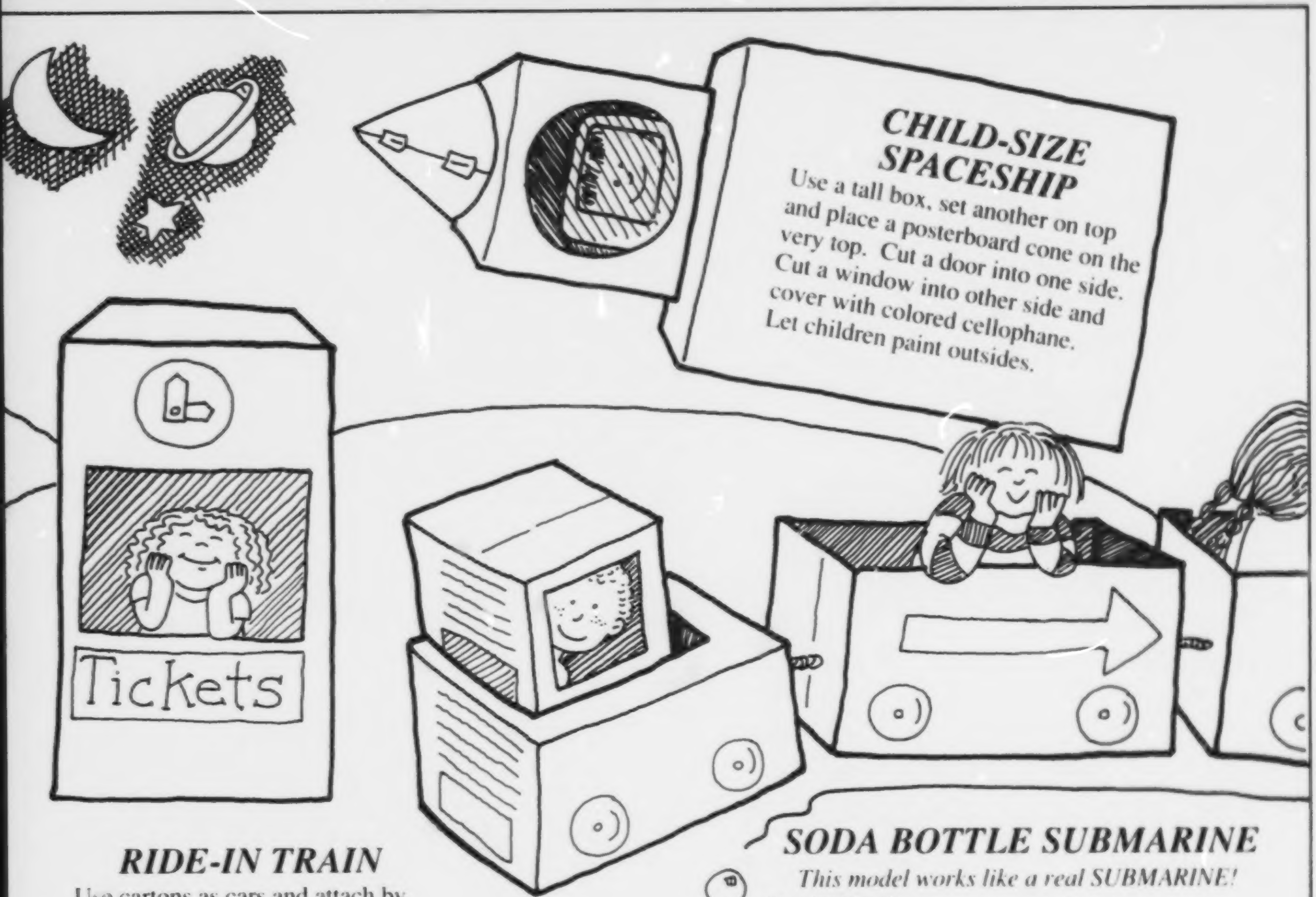
◆ Caboose: Assemble as for coach. Make an opening in one side. Cut off a peaked top about 3 inches down and push into opening. Cut out windows.

2. Attach each car to others with string and sticks.

REFRIGERATOR CARTON BUS

A refrigerator carton, on its side, makes a great bus. Add another box to the front and cut out windows and a door. Use round pizza cardboard and bolt and nut for steering wheel.



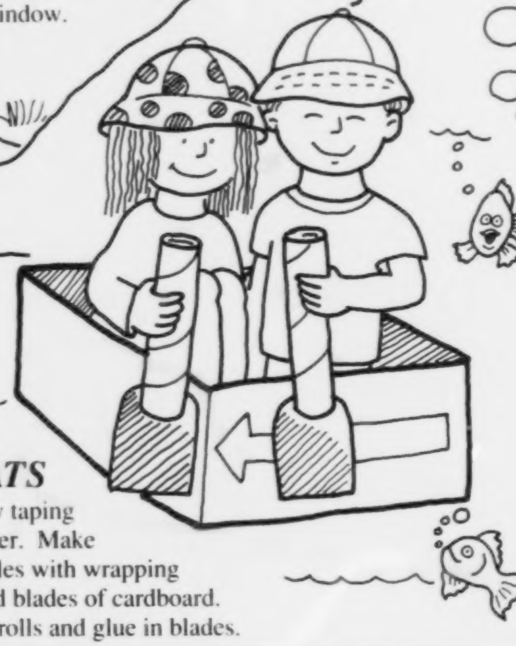


CHILD-SIZE SPACESHIP

Use a tall box, set another on top and place a posterboard cone on the very top. Cut a door into one side. Cut a window into other side and cover with colored cellophane. Let children paint outsides.

RIDE-IN TRAIN

Use cartons as cars and attach by ropes. Paper plates make wheels. CABOOSE-open bottom of box. Set on top so child can stand and look out the window.



BIG BOATS

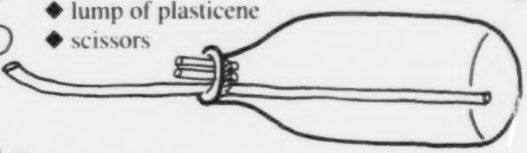
Make boats by taping cartons together. Make oars and paddles with wrapping paper rolls and blades of cardboard. Cut slots into rolls and glue in blades.

SODA BOTTLE SUBMARINE

This model works like a real SUBMARINE!

You'll Need:

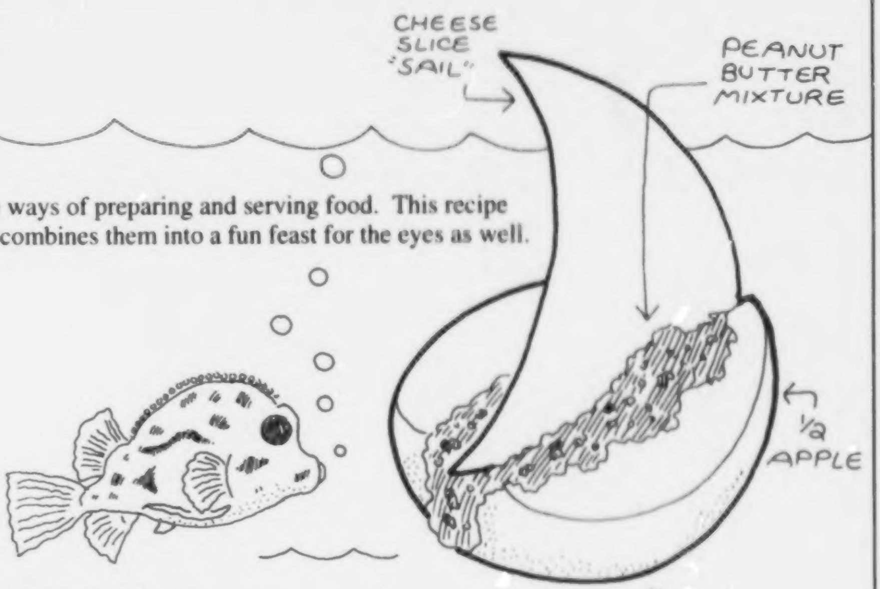
- ◆ one 2-liter plastic soda bottle (without hard plastic bottom)
- ◆ three feet of plastic tubing (found in aquarium and pet stores)
- ◆ lump of plasticene
- ◆ scissors



What to Do:

1. Cut the tubing with a scissor into one 2-foot piece and two 6-inch pieces.
2. Stick the long piece into the bottle, so that the end in the bottle reaches the bottom of the soda bottle and the other end sticks out.
3. Place the shorter tubes in neck of bottle, so they are half in and half out.
4. Stuff plasticene around neck to secure tubes and make it air tight.
5. To make the submarine sink, place it in a tub of water, and suck air out of bottle by using long tube. Water will rush in through smaller tubes and sink the "sub." To make it rise again, blow air into bottle. Water will rush out.

RECIPES SET TO SAIL



APPLE BOATS

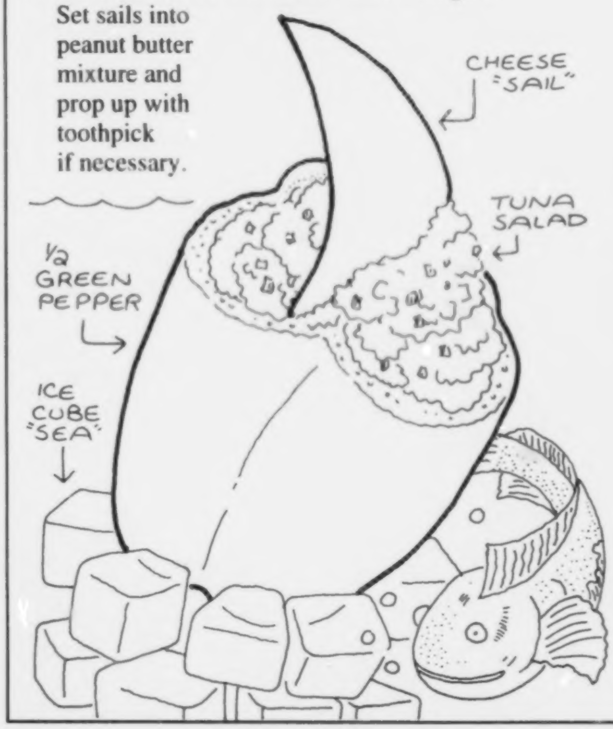
Children always enjoy attractive ways of preparing and serving food. This recipe uses some of their favorites and combines them into a fun feast for the eyes as well.

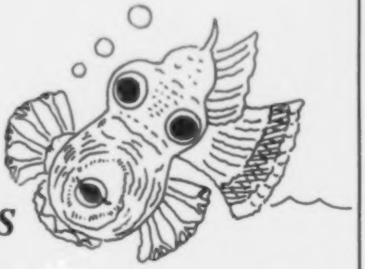
You'll Need:

- ◆ 2 apples
- ◆ 1/2 cup peanut butter
- ◆ 2 Tblsp. raisins
- ◆ 1/2 cup crispy rice cereal
- ◆ 2 slices cheese
- ◆ plastic knife
- ◆ bowl
- ◆ mixing spoon
- ◆ toothpick

What to Do:

1. Cut apples in half and cut a wedge out of the core.
2. Mix peanut butter, raisins, and cereal. Fill wedges in each apple with mixture.
3. Cut cheese slices in half to make triangles. Set sails into peanut butter mixture and prop up with toothpick if necessary.

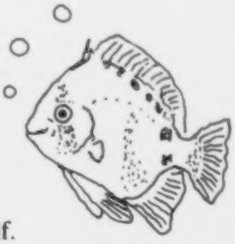




TUNA BOATS

You'll Need:

- ◆ tuna Salad—made from tuna fish, mayonnaise, celery bits
- ◆ 1 small green pepper
- ◆ 1 slice cheese
- ◆ plastic knife
- ◆ spoon
- ◆ ice cubes
- ◆ bowl
- ◆ toothpick



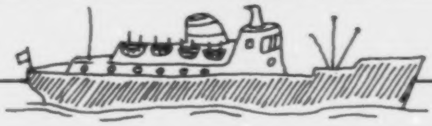
What to Do:

1. Cut green pepper in half.
2. Fill with tuna salad.
3. Cut cheese slice in half and to make triangles. Set sail on top of tuna salad and prop up with toothpick if necessary.
4. Set boat in a bowl of ice cubes "sea."

A TRANSPORTATION CARD GAME

by Karen Stephens

Play a game of "Pick a card and answer the question." Using index cards, write down simple questions about transportation for children to answer. Once you have the cards written, let children take turns picking the cards randomly. Read the question and have a child respond. (Children enjoy picking the cards at random; it's like a game of chance for them and the mystery is a great motivator for participation.)



You are going to cross the ocean to Africa to see where gorillas live. Would you rather take a car or boat? Why?

You are working in a job where you are called a pilot. What do you drive? *(airplane, rocket, space shuttle, helicopter,* or *hot air balloon)*

You are driving down the road and your car just stops. What do you think might have happened?

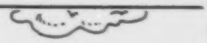
You have to move all your toys and bedroom furniture to a new house. Would you rather take a taxi or a large truck? Why?

It is raining outside. Would you rather come to school in a car or on a motorcycle. Why?

You hear a loud siren coming from a car. What do you think it is? *(ambulance* or *police car)*

You want to go see the fish that live deep under the ocean. Would you need to go down in a submarine or a canoe? Why?

You are riding on something that has only two wings. What is it? *(airplane)* You are in something that flies, but has no wings. What is it? *(helicopter* or *hot air balloon)*



THE SCIENCE OF TRANSPORTATION

by Karen Stephens

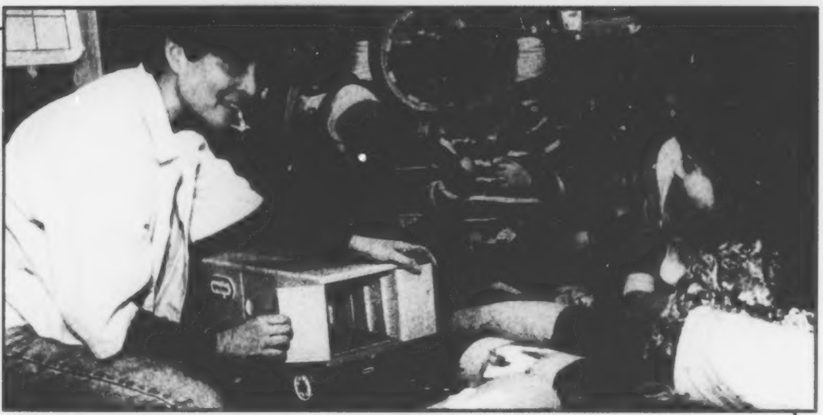
Starting with the invention of the wheel, transportation—the job of getting from here to there— has inspired people to apply the science of invention to everyday problem solving.

Transportation inventions have not only put our science skills to work, but also our desire for adventure and beauty. Who can deny how lovely a hot air balloon appears as it floats through the sky?

Helping children learn about the science of transportation should begin with many simple, hands-on experiences. Here are some ideas to get you started.

- Take a "transportation walk" around a neighborhood block. Take a pencil and paper for recording what children see and hear. How many different types of transportation can children identify? Be on the lookout for buses, subways, taxis, bicycles, planes, helicopters, roller blades, pogo sticks—ANY method of getting from one place to another. Back in the classroom, post the results of your transportation checklist.
- On a transportation walk, take along a tape recorder. Play the tape at group time and see how many transportation sounds children can recognize. How were the sounds made? Why were they needed? For instance, why did large trucks beep when they backed up? (They warned people of the truck's presence.) Why did the ambulances need sirens? (To notify people to clear the road for an emergency.)

- Plan for SAFE transportation field trips. (No more than one per week; otherwise children become too tired.) **Field Trip ideas:** bus station, train station, airport, lake or ocean pier, bike rental office, etc. If you are lucky enough to live near a train line, plan for a half an hour ride from one train depot to another. Take sack lunches along and enjoy the outing. Invite parents along to enjoy the ride!
- Create a "How We Get to School" graph. At group time, ask children all the different ways they arrived at school. Across the top of a poster board, write down the name of each transportation method and create a vertical column under each type. Allow each child to put an X (or write their name) under the method of transportation he uses to get to school. Tally up each column. Which is the most popular method of transportation: bus, bike, walking, subway, car, snow mobile, ferry boat? Which is the method least used? Why?
- After having many "eyewitness" experiences with various modes of transportation, let children create their own transportation vehicles in the block corner. Be sure to provide them with any extra materials needed.



Depending on children's creativity, they may use any or all of the following as they build block corner transportation inventions: pie tins, empty toilet paper and paper towel rolls, shoe boxes, foam pieces or packing molds, empty, plastic berry baskets.

- Ask children to work cooperatively writing a story about a child who travels across the country to visit his relatives.

How many types of transportation can children incorporate in their story? For instance, ask children how the child would get across the mountains. (a horse, donkey, jeep, semi-trailer) How would the child get across the Mississippi River? (boat, canoe, raft) What type of transportation could the child use to get across the desert very fast? (plane, dune buggie, four wheeler)

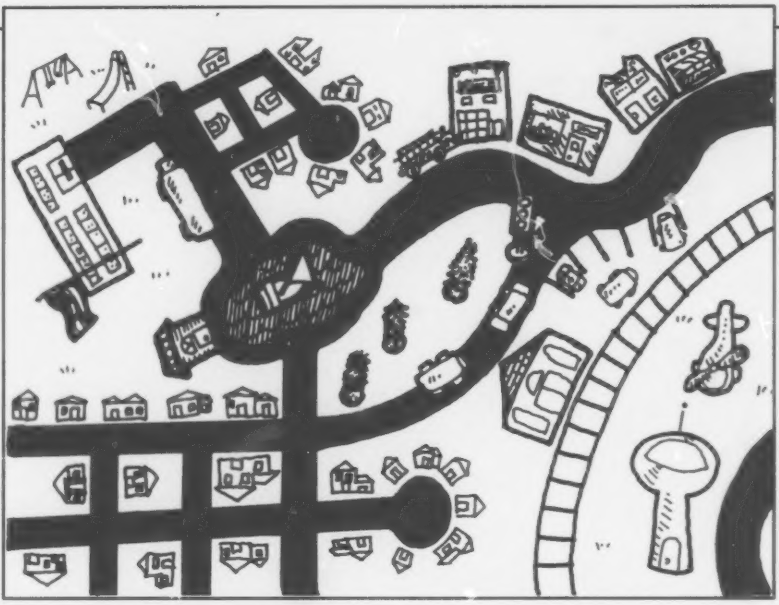
- Part of the science of transportation is understanding that different terrain demands different types of vehicles. Create a transportation sorting game that is a variation of a habitat sort game Barbara Lorton wrote about in *Workjobs* (Addison-Wesley). Provide pictures of many different types of transportation. Create sorting piles by labeling (in writing and pictures) a shoebox for each of the following categories: land, water, air. Let children sort the cards into the appropriate shoe boxes. **Water:** motor boat, steam ship, paddle boat, jet ski, submarine, raft, ferry, sail boat, inflated tire tube, canoe. **Air:** helicopter, hot air balloon, hang glider, jet, bi-plane, crop duster, blimp, ultra-lite airplane, propeller airplane, rocket, space shuttle. **Land:** jeep, motorcycle, bicycle, car, semi-truck, tractor, bus, subway, train, scooter, rollerblades, ice skate, cross country skis, snow mobile.

A variation of this game would be a "Transportation Power Sort." In this game, children sort the types of energy needed to power various types of transportation. **Human energy:** bikes, cross country skis, small paddle boat, roller blades, ice skates. **Animal energy:** buggies, dog sleds, horse drawn hay wagons. **Gasoline or like fuel:** trains, busses, cars, trucks, planes, rockets. **Electricity:** some busses,subways, and cars. **Wind powered:** hang gliding, hot air balloons, (fuel heats the air to keep the balloon aloft, but wind currents make the balloon move through the air).

Another sorting game would consist of children sorting vehicles that have wings or don't have wings. (Planes do; trains don't.) Children can also sort vehicles that use propellers and those that don't. (For instance, some planes, helicopters, blimps, and even submarines use propellers.)

- Part of the science of transportation is keeping vehicles in good working order. Talk to children about problems they have heard about keeping vehicles operating. Invite any type of transportation mechanic into your classroom as a special visitor. Encourage him to bring in SAFE repair tools to the classroom to share with children. Ask the mechanic to share typical types of problems people experience with mechanical transportation vehicles. If possible, arrange a visit to the mechanic's work site so children can see the mechanic put his knowledge to work. (Children are amazed to see a car high up on a hydraulic lift!) The increasing use of computers in car repair is also of interest to children and adults alike.

- If you live in an area that has a vehicle factory, such as a car, truck, or boat factory, don't miss the chance to tour the site as a field trip. Safety will be a big concern, but with a preview site visit by the teacher and good pre-planning, the experience can be an invaluable science lesson. The robotics used in auto manufacturing plants, are a true delight for children!



MOTOR MAT

by Susan Entz

- "Errrrrr, here comes the fire engine."
- *"Come on, kids. Get in the car and we'll go to the mall."*

Encourage this type of imaginative pretend play with small vehicles and blocks by adding a motor mat. By creating or purchasing a vinyl mat that depicts a village or country roadway, you provide a visual context for young children to extend their creative play.

CREATE A MAT

Make your own motor mat from a colored piece of vinyl, which can be purchased from a sign shop. A less expensive alternative is a plastic drop cloth from a hardware store or the back of a discarded promotional banner from a restaurant or retailer.

Talk with the class about what they want to include on their mat. Ask them to decide whether they prefer a city or a country scene, and what facilities they want. *"Do you want a park? How about a pond? A hospital? A school? Where will the people live?"*

- Sketch out a plan on paper that incorporates all of their suggestions. Once the scale is worked out, lay down the roads by attaching wide black electrical tape. Create divided roads by placing small yellow strips down the middle of each road.
- Cut out blue self-adhesive contact paper to form ponds and add waves with black or blue permanent marking pens.
- Form the parks, golf course, or residential lawns by cutting out sections of green contact paper. Make trees by cutting an artificial evergreen into small pieces and inserting each into a ball of clay so it stands upright.
- Draw buildings with permanent marking pens or cut out building pictures, cover each with clear contact paper, and press them onto a mat.

Once the mat is completed, look for manipulatives that enhance play. Provide a variety of small vehicles, including a boat for the pond and an airplane. Add tiny traffic signs and human figures.

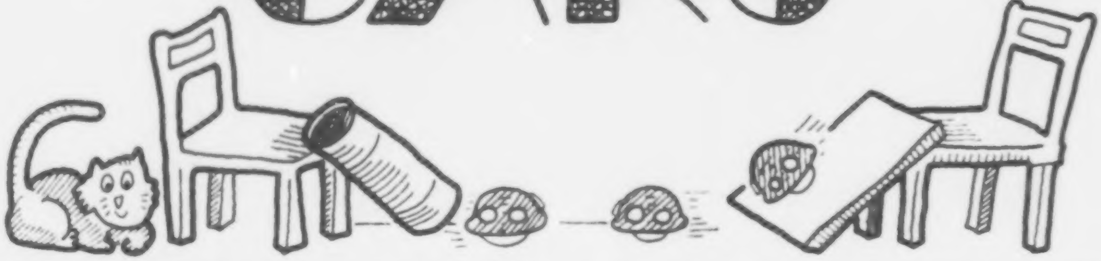
ROLE OF THE TEACHER

You may need to join the play briefly to model and encourage socio-dramatic play. You may do this in several ways:

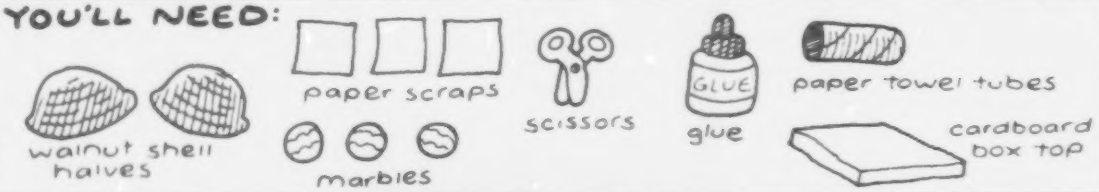
- Take a role in the drama to provide a model for what a new character might say. For example: *"Excuse me, sir. You were speeding on Elm Street. Could I see your driver's license. I'll have to write up a ticket."*
- Invite new players into the play. By giving them a role, you may encourage shy or reluctant children to participate. For example: *"Jane, we've had a wreck. Go get the ambulance so you can take the injured man to the hospital."*
- When children's attention is beginning to wander, you can extend a play theme by suggesting a new direction. For example: *"Clank, clank. Oh, no! Something's wrong with my car. Let's take it to the garage to see what's wrong."*
- Help children to moderate their energy level when the number of crashes or the noise level accelerates, by redirecting the play to park the cars briefly at the park for a picnic, going for a swim in the pond, or other quiet activity consistent with the play theme.

Once the play is clearly on track, let children use the materials and their imaginations on their own.

CRAZY CARS



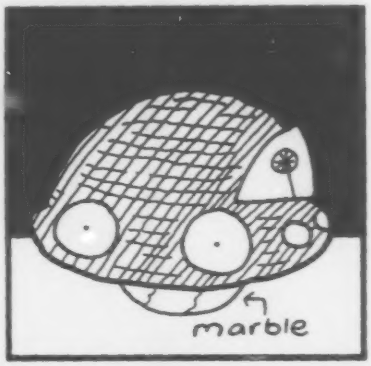
YOU'LL NEED:


walnut shell halves
paper scraps
marbles
scissors
GLUE
glue
paper towel tubes
cardboard box top

WHAT TO DO:

1.

cut out paper scraps for wheels, windshield, and lights. Glue onto walnut shell



2.

Place marble under shell.

3.

Place a few CRAZY CARS in a box and tilt box to watch 'em go!

4.

Use paper towel tubes, boxes, and chairs to make downhill ramps.

5.

Put CRAZY CARS on top of ramps and let them race to the bottom.

Idea by Kathy Faggella

FROM HERE TO THERE

by Jeannine Perez

Introducing map skills is not an end in itself, but it is the beginning to many skills. We do not try to teach pre-schoolers to read and interpret a road map, but we can use mapping to encourage and connect new concepts to emerging thinking skills. Through maps, children gain:

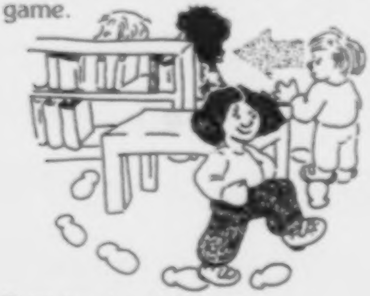
- the ability to follow directions
- problem-solving
- enhanced language (the ability to describe and define)
- the ability to stretch the boundaries of the known world
- understanding that symbols can stand for real things
- understanding of sequence
- a sense of space and order
- math vocabulary

Without getting into abstract concepts of space and geography that are too complicated for young children, we can plan an exciting unit with maps. Adapt these simple activities for your own classroom.

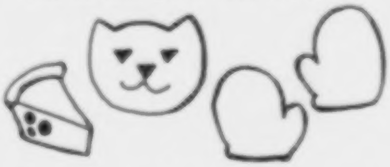
- Read *The Berenstain Bears and the Spooky Old Tree* by Stan and Jan Berenstain (Beginner Books) and explore an old tree working with spatial concepts of *into, up, through*, etc. Create your own obstacle course in the classroom or on the playground. Use barrels lying on their sides, make low bridges from planks on the ground, and create all sorts of Berenstain-like imaginary hazards. Act out the story.

- Look around your room or playground at circle time and give brief three or four sentence description of what you see. *"Our room is a rectangle. It has three windows and two doors. The clock is over the snack table."* Concentrate on words to describe shapes, colors, sizes, directions, and terms like *over, under*, and *beside*. Encourage children to add more description. Ask them if they could help someone find a light switch or a table in a dark room, using their own words. Repeat this activity several times over a few days and add more specific descriptive language and right and left directions.
- Take a photo (instant-developing, if possible) of the area and ask children to describe the room or playground again, using the photograph. Encourage them to use spatial terms. Rearrange the room as a class project, and describe it again.
- On a large sheet of paper, draw a basic room shape. Introduce the idea that symbols can stand for real objects. Say: *"Instead of drawing a round table in the middle, we can use a circle to show where the table is. Shall we draw squares for chairs?"* Keep this concept very simple and do not try to

include many symbols or details. When you think children understand that the circle can be a symbol for a real table, draw tiny footprints around the table symbol. Say: *"These marks are footprints that show a path around the table."* Play a familiar song or beat a rhythm on a drum, and ask children to march and follow the path around the table until the song or beat ends. Expand this idea and make a game of drawing symbols to that give directions for Follow the Leader or another game.



- Make storytelling more exciting by using chalk, a flannelboard, or pencil and paper to take children through the story. Story lines in "Red Riding Hood," "The Three Bears," or *Million and Millions of Cats* are easily traced using symbols for landscape. Try this activity with many stories.
- Find or draw simple rebus stories to reinforce the concept of symbols for real objects. Make it a simple story like "The Three Little Kittens," and draw all the nouns (*kittens, mittens, pie, rat*). Help children make up their own stories, drawing pictures for parts of the story, and dictating the rest to you.



- Make a tabletop or floor map. Use a flat box or board and blocks for three-dimensional symbols. If you have a story cloth with tiny wooden buildings, trees, bridges, etc., use it to map and act out stories.
- Use colored chalk on sidewalks and draw a rectangle or other shape and indicate the playground. Show where slides, swings, and trees are located.
- Find and talk about as many kinds of maps as you can collect. (Send a note home asking for all kinds of maps.) Look at road maps, globes, topographical and political maps, house plans, and weather maps (if possible). Compare them with the simple picture maps you've made. What do they all have in common? As different as they are, each is a small representation of a large area. Make a bulletin board that is a montage of your collected and created maps. It isn't necessary for detailed explanations about maps; you are simply exposing children to the many different kinds of maps. They do not need to understand the maps, just be aware that many kinds exist.
- End the unit with treasure hunts that combine directions with pictures showing simple symbols. You can use counted steps for distances, right/left directions, and a sequence of notes to find a treasure you've buried in the sandbox, or hidden under a bush, or behind a tree.

Children love treasure hunts, and you can encourage them to make up their own during outside play. This fun is also practice in following directions, problem-solving, and giving clear descriptions and directions to others.

Hopefully, these simple activities will give your children practice in finding their own way from here to there (without taking shortcuts in the wrong direction), and may even help **you** learn to pay more attention to directions and maps.

IN THE BOOK CORNER

RAILS, ROADS, AND RIVERS

by Sandra Malcolm

In this issue, our book guides travel in the river, ride the rails, explore a city by taxi, and experience the joys and sorrows of having a mom who travels a lot. Many excellent books are available on transportation and should be explored for inclusion into a unit. However, I feel these books offer an unusual slant to a familiar theme. Where else can young children spend three days on a river in a red canoe than through a good book? Enjoy your trip.

FREIGHT TRAIN

by Donald Crews (Greenwillow Books) captures the essence of a freight train in simple text and colorful illustrations as the reader follows the train on its journey.

BEFORE READING, ask children what they know about trains. List all responses on chart paper. Has anyone ever ridden on a train? Let them tell about their ride. Then choose a child to be the engine. Have each child hook onto the train. Travel around the room as a train. Return to hear the story.

AFTER READING, help children name the different kinds of cars on the freight train. Ask, "What do you think each car would carry?" Add these responses to the chart paper. "How does the train stay on the track?" "What do we call the person who drives a train?"

ACTIVITIES

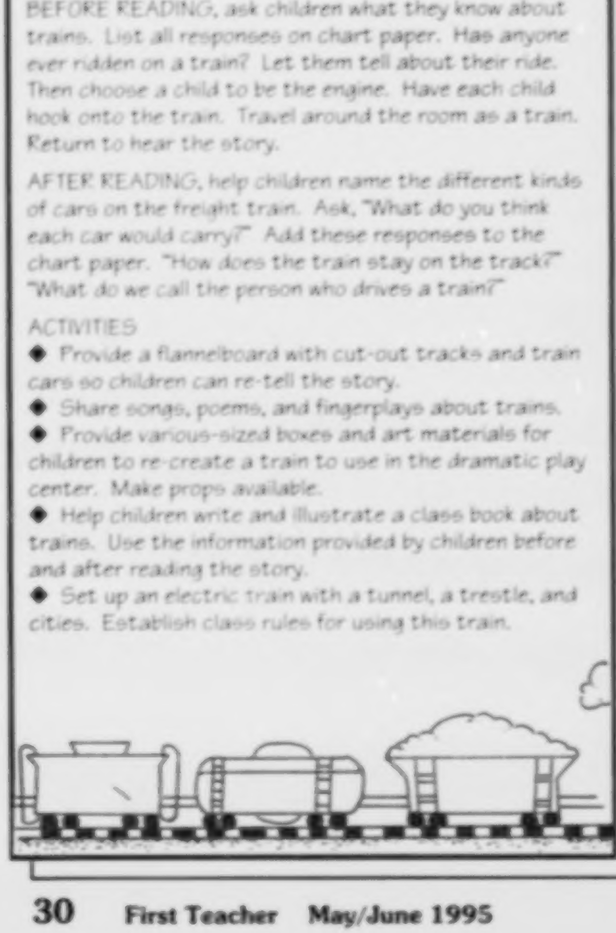
◆ Provide a flannelboard with cut-out tracks and train cars so children can re-tell the story.

◆ Share songs, poems, and fingerplays about trains.

◆ Provide various-sized boxes and art materials for children to re-create a train to use in the dramatic play center. Make props available.

◆ Help children write and illustrate a class book about trains. Use the information provided by children before and after reading the story.

◆ Set up an electric train with a tunnel, a trestle, and cities. Establish class rules for using this train.



THE ADVENTURES OF TAXI DOG

by Debra and Sal Barracca (Dial Books) tells how a homeless dog and a city taxi driver become friends.

BEFORE READING, ask if anyone has ever ridden in a taxi. Let them tell about it. Show pictures of taxis or a toy taxi. Discuss the distinguishing features of a taxi. Compare riding in a taxi to taking a bus.

AFTER READING, ask: "How did Jim and Maxi become friends?" "Where does our story take place?" If anyone has ever been to New York City, let them tell about it. Ask children if they noticed something special about the words in the story. (rhyme) Let them name some of the rhyming words as you read the story again.

ACTIVITIES

◆ Encourage taxi-play. Help children create a taxi to use during play. Provide a stuffed dog to be Maxi.

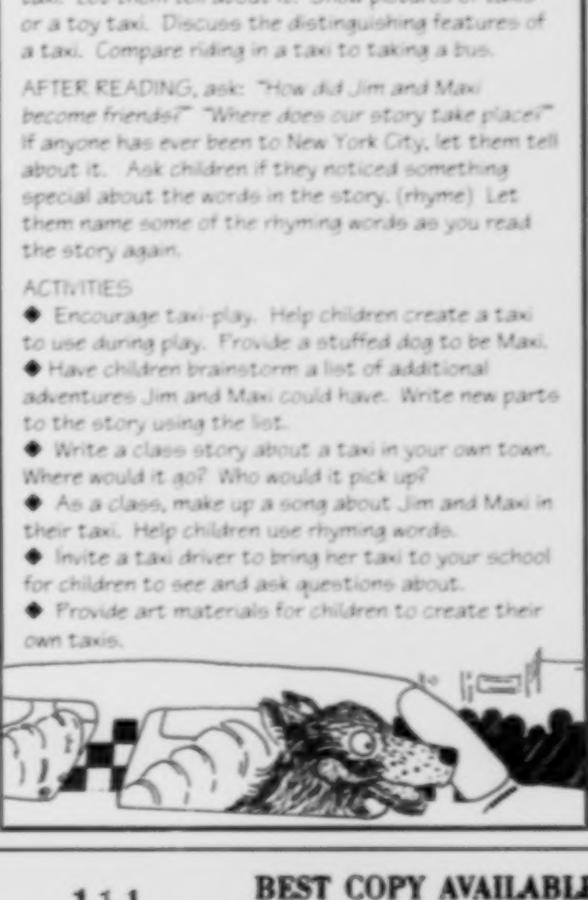
◆ Have children brainstorm a list of additional adventures Jim and Maxi could have. Write new parts to the story using the list.

◆ Write a class story about a taxi in your own town. Where would it go? Who would it pick up?

◆ As a class, make up a song about Jim and Maxi in their taxi. Help children use rhyming words.

◆ Invite a taxi driver to bring her taxi to your school for children to see and ask questions about.

◆ Provide art materials for children to create their own taxis.



THREE DAYS ON A RIVER IN A RED CANOE

by Vera B. Williams (Morrow) is about two cousins and their mothers who plan to carry out a three day canoe trip filled with many adventures.

BEFORE READING, bring into school a toy canoe with a FOR SALE sign on it. Ask children what could we do with this if we bought it? Discuss the differences between a canoe, a row boat, a sailboat, and a motor boat.

AFTER READING, ask questions such as: "Did children want the trip to end? Why or why not?" "What did they take with them?" "Why did they need to take life jackets and an extra paddle?" "What kind of weather did they have during their trip?" "Why did Sam fall out of the canoe?" "Who was Sixtoes?" "What did they promise to bring him?" "Did they keep their promise?"

ACTIVITIES

◆ Provide a canoe, life jackets, and other camping supplies for the dramatic play area. Include maps and writing materials for trip planning.

◆ Demonstrate knot-tying as explained in the book. Help children try to tie knots.

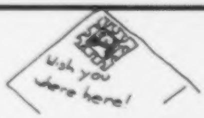
◆ Provide wood for a pretend campfire. Sit around the fire telling stories and watching the sky as they did in the story.

◆ Sample freeze dried foods and dried apricots. Make fruit stew and dumplings following in the recipe of story.

◆ Look closely at the pictures in the book. Make cardboard fish to replicate those in the book. Provide fishing equipment and the fish in the dramatic play area.

◆ Discuss each day's adventure and what they saw. Have children think of other things that could happen or they might see. Add new days to their trip by writing your own story.

MY MOM TRAVELS A LOT



by Caroline Feller Bauer (Fredrick Warne & Co.) tells how a young child finds both good and bad in her situation of having a mom who travels on business much of the time.

BEFORE READING, ask a question such as, *"How would it make you feel if your mom had to travel a lot?"* Make a list of the good feelings and the bad feelings.

AFTER READING, ask questions such as, *"What were her good reasons for Mom being away?" "What were her bad reasons?" "Can you add any to her list?" "What did it mean when she said ; 'We get a lot of long distance phone calls?" "Have you ever gotten a long distance phone call? From whom?" "She said she gets to stay up late sometimes and doesn't always have to make her bed. Do you get to do different things when Mom isn't home? What things? Why?"*

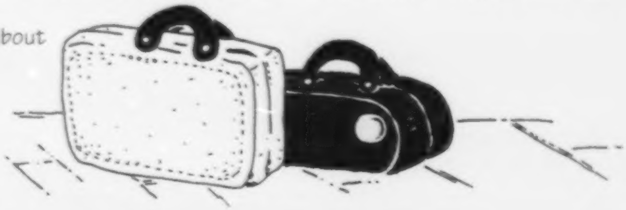
ACTIVITIES

◆ Make a collection of postcards from various places. Encourage children to bring in postcards they have received. On a bulletin board, place a large map; use yarn to connect the postcards to the location from which they were sent.

◆ Collect travel posters, brochures, and maps for the play center. Encourage children to travel to new places.

◆ Make available writing and art materials for children to write travel stories, make tickets, or create their own travel posters.

◆ Write a class story of good things/bad things about Mom being away a lot. Illustrate the story.



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STILL IN THE BOOK CORNER

THINGS THAT MOVE

by Paula Gaj Sitarz

There are so many wonderful books to share with children about things that go.

- Byron Barton in *Airport* (Thomas Y. Crowell) relates what happens at an airport from passengers boarding a plane to take-off. In *I Want to Be an Astronaut* (Crowell) Barton again combines bold, child-like illustrations with brief text to explore an exciting flight in a space shuttle.
- Three books by Gail Gibbons are appropriate to share with preschoolers. In *Trucks* (Crowell) Gibbons combines a simple text with detailed illustrations of an incredible variety of trucks. She provides a brief look at the beginnings of flight and then shows children all types of planes in *Flying* (Holiday House). In *Trains* (Holiday House), children will enjoy all kinds of trains past and present from steam engines to passenger and freight trains.
- Anne Rockwell has written a "Transportation series" for young children all published by E.P. Dutton. Each book has her trademark bright, cheerful watercolors that feature animal characters. In *Bikes*, children will enjoy learning about the different uses for bikes and the various kinds of cycles from trail bikes and mopeds to unicycles and racing bikes. Rockwell uses the same format and simple text that explains the types and uses of each vehicle in *Boats*, *Cars*, *Trains*, *Planes*, *Trucks*, *Fire Engines*, and *Big Wheels*. In *Things That Go*, each two-page spread shows things that go in different places, including the city, on the road, and in the air.
- Children will love the comical sheep in Nancy Shaw's *Sheep in a Jeep* and *Sheep on a Ship* (Houghton Mifflin). In the first book, the sheep have a misadventure when they push a jeep downhill and into a mud puddle. Their second journey on a ship almost ends in disaster when a storm descends on them.
- Diane Siebert has written two beautiful books with poetic, rhyming, rhythmic texts. In *Train Song* (Crowell) lavish double page, detailed paintings compliment the text. Children will hear the sounds of a train — steel wheels rolling, rumbling, grumbling. They'll learn where trains go, what types there are, and what they carry as they clickety-clack. In *Truck Song* (Crowell) the narrator is a trucker who, as he hauls his load along the highway, sees many types of trucks from tow trucks to "greasy, grimy, gritty trucks."
- Hope Norman Coulter has written an amusing tale in *Uncle Chuck's Truck* (Bradbury Press). A young boy joins his Uncle Chuck as he takes his truck full of hay to feed the cows.
- Michel Gay provides children with a wild adventure in *Night Ride* (William Morrow). Gabriel and his dad park their van to rest until the traffic passes. A big trailer backs into the van and hooks onto it. Animals from the trailer—monkeys, a bear, and a tiger—join Peter. The adventure is fun until the van uncouples from the trailer and careens into a circus tent.
- Mr. Bear spends days making a sailboat in Mr. *Bear's Boat* by Thomas Graham (E.P. Dutton). He and Mrs. Bear finally enjoy their peaceful ride until a speedboat with a water skier, an airplane flying low with a banner, and a deep sea fishing boat drive them crazy.
- There are boats of all sorts to savor in Betsy Maestro and Ellen DelVecchio's *Big City Port* (Four Winds). Children will enjoy the simple text that introduces children to boats and ships, freighters and tankers, tugs and fireboats.
- In *Daisy's Taxi* by Ruth Young (Orchard Books) Daisy has a water taxi service. She's constantly rowing people, packages, and items from the mainland to the island and back. Marcia Sewall's soft, pastel, full-color illustrations bring the story alive.

CREATIVE MOVERS

by Karel Kilimnik

Creative movement can lead to dancing and there are many terrific books that will encourage children to get up and boogie!

- Practice makes perfect as young D.W. shows us in the delightful book, *D. W. Flips!* by Marc Brown (Little, Brown). Arthur the anteater's younger sister takes gymnastic classes and is determined to learn how to do a forward roll. She jars family routines with her constant practicing but it does pay off.

  Marc Brown's stories about D.W. and Arthur's family portray dilemmas facing children in a very concise way and always ends on a positive note. D.W. is very determined to learn a new skill and keeps practicing until she accomplishes her goal.

- Simple text and expressive pictures create a ballet counting book. *One Ballerina Two* by Vivian French (Lothrop, Lee & Shepard) starts with ten plies by a graceful ballerina and goes on downwards including five gallops by an aspiring ballerina and concludes with one happy hug. Perfect partners are a limber older girl and an active younger one—one neatly attired with long legs doing ballet movements effortlessly, the other one full of enthusiasm and energy. This is a book to nurture children who dream of becoming dancers.

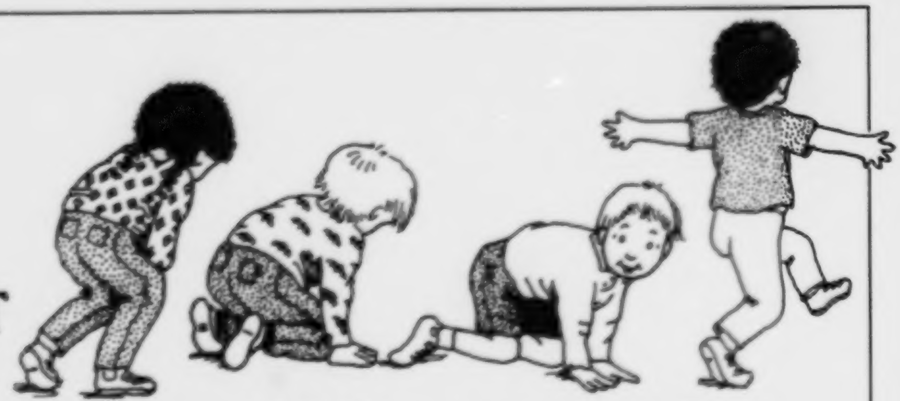
- Max unexpectedly joins his sister's ballet class. Every Saturday morning he walks his sister to her class before going to a baseball game. One morning he is early, his sister invites him in and Max finds himself drawn into all the movement even as he perches on a chair by the door. The teacher invites him to join the class. Lo and behold the ballet exercises even serve him well at his weekly baseball game! *Max* by Rachel Isadora (Macmillan) portrays ballet as useful to different people for different thing and opens the door for boys to participate in this dance form.

- The joy of dancing proves to be a good survival tool in *Dance Away* by George Shannon (Mulberry Books). Jose Aruego and Ariane Dewey's colorful illustrations practically hop into your lap with all of their joyful movements. Rabbit likes to dance all the time which proves a bit tiring for his friends as he likes to get them dancing too. One day Fox captures Rabbit's friends and prepares to eat them. Rabbit gets them all dancing for their lives and succeeds in dumping Fox.

- The cakewalk is a dance rooted in Afro-American culture. The winning couple who prance and strut around a square take home a cake, hence the name cakewalk. Patricia C. McKissack has written a wonderful story based on a picture of her grandparents who had just won a cakewalk. *Mirandy and Brother Wind* (Random House) has young Mirandy trying to capture Brother Wind for her partner at the cakewalk.

  She asks everyone how to catch him and gets all kinds of advice, She even visits the conjure woman for a spell to use. Ezel, her clumsy friend, is her only other choice for a partner. Mirandy winds up valuing her friendship in making her decision as to her partner. This book is really for kindergarten and up.

- *Shimmy Shake Earthquake Don't Forget to Dance Poems* is just that. From Jack Prelutsky's "Forty performing bananas" in "bright yellow slippery skins" to "Tap Dancing for Liberty Blake": "Antics in the attic, Antics in the cellars, Upstairs and downstairs, Tap-dancing fellahs! ...Tap to your funeral, ...tap into the ground, Tap up to heaven and look around!" the possibilities are endless to just get up and move. Give it a try!



ACT IT OUT

by Susan Mills

Children love pretending to do or be something else. You can encourage them by using creative movement in your classroom. Begin by having children do a calming exercise to help them focus on the task at hand.

MOVEMENT AT THE BEACH

This beach exercise works well. Have children lie down on the floor, with enough personal space to work. *"Close your eyes and push all the thoughts out of your head. You are lying on the soft sand. The hot sun is shining down. The waves are splashing onto the sand in a gentle rhythm that makes you feel very calm and quiet. Overhead you hear the squawk of a sea gull passing by. You are alone on the beach— just the sun, the sky, the water and you. Lie still and let your mind and body relax."*

Lead children in this exploration of the beach environment. Have them become, through imitative movement, something else. Allow children the time to think of how to respond and then to do it with their bodies. *"How would you move if you were the grass on the dunes?" "Show me how a crab would move." "How would a sandpiper move in the sand?" How would a sea gull fly?" "Show me a dolphin at play in the ocean." "Show me a shark looking for his dinner."* These are suggestions for movement lessons; all the examples are not used at one time.

MOVING ON

Children love to imitate animals so extend this lesson into many movement sessions. Encourage them to use their whole bodies to imitate an animal. Try to use all the levels of space, high, middle and low, in these exercises. Each session may be five to ten minutes long so children are focused and involved.

When your class is comfortable working as a group to explore movement, begin using pantomime. It is easier for young children to work as a group so that they can all participate. Everyone can act out simple tasks: combing hair, putting on a coat, tossing a ball.

Follow simultaneous pantomime with individual pantomime. Have a child give the action a title, such as running, eating, or drawing. Practice often so children feel comfortable "performing" in front of others.

Sequential pantomime puts several actions together. Use simple everyday activities such as getting a box of cereal, pouring it in a bowl, adding milk, and eating it; or going into the library, looking for a book, checking it out, then reading it. Play Charades when children are comfortable with pantomime.

Creative movement become easier with lots of experience. As children become comfortable with showing motions and actions, start using literature to act out a story. The literature needs to have highly developed action and strong characterization. Read aloud as the "cast" shows the actions of the story.

Simple stories are great for dramatizing.

- *The Blanket* by John Burningham (Crowell)
- *Caps for Sale* by Esphyr Slobodkina (W.R. Scott)
- *Titch* by Pat Hutchins (Macmillan)
- *Whistle for Willie* by Ezra Jack Keats (Viking)

Stories that have lots of repetition are really fun to dramatize. Cumulative tales, where each event is added on, are also great.

- *The Little Red Hen* by Paul Galdone (Clarion)
- *Millions of Cats* by Wanda Gag (Coward-McCann)
- *One Fine Day* retold and illustrated by Nonny Hogrogian (Macmillan)

UP, UP AND AWAY!

by Margery A. Kranyik

Fasten your seat belts! All aboard! Buckle up! Bon voyage! Lift off! Time to take a trip—a trip in music and movement.

✈ Begin by reviewing and discussing what children know about the meaning of "transportation." Use pictures to stimulate discussion.

✈ Sing a verse of "The Wheels on the Bus." Add new verses according to the various modes of transportation you wish to feature. Ask children to create motions for each new verse.

The blades on the chopper go whip, whip, whip...
The skis on the slope go shuss, shuss, shuss...
The motor on the boat goes putt, putt, putt...
The blades (or wheels) on the skates go glide, glide, glide...

Encourage children to make up their own verses and motions.

✈ Teach the song "Old MacDonald's Truck" from *Piggyback Songs for Infants and Toddlers* (Totline). Ask children to imagine where the truck is going and what it is carrying. A fine selection of car and train songs is available in the same songbook.

Play "The Locomotion" from *Dancin' Magic* by Joanie Bartels (Discovery) and "Little Red Caboose" from *Family Folk Festival* (Music for Little People). Have children make a train by lining up and placing their hands on the shoulders of the person in front of them. Choose one child to be the engine and another to be the caboose and "chug" around the room or play area. Use a train song as background music.

✈ Sing the chorus of "Jingle Bells." Show pictures of people on a sleigh ride. Ask questions such as, *"Where would you live if you rode in a sleigh?" "Where would you be going?" "How would you keep warm?" "Who would go with you?"* Emphasize the use of the sleigh as transportation, not merely as a holiday object.

✈ Try the following chant with children:

Take me for a ride in the air-plane,
Take me for a ride in the air-plane,
Take me for a ride,
Take me for a ride in the air-plane.

Children can clap, patch (pat thighs) or snap fingers as an accompaniment.

♩ Look through your collection of old favorite popular songs. Many deal with transportation themes: "Up, Up, and Away in my Beautiful Balloon" by the Fifth Dimension, "Yellow Submarine" by the Beatles, "Leavin' on a Jet Plane" and "Take Me for a Ride in the Car-Car" by Peter, Paul, and Mary.

✈ The oldest mode of transportation is by foot. Have children discuss places they have walked —to school, church, a friend's home, for exercise. Ask them to see how many different ways they can walk—with knees high, on heels, with giant steps, with knees bent, with knees stiff, with tiny steps, sideways, backwards, on tippy-toe. Ask them to walk with their body "high" or with their body "low."

✈ Our bodies can be on the go other ways besides walking. *"Skip in a circle." "Jump to the door." "Slide around the room." "Tip-toe with a friend," "Leap across the room." "Hop up and down." "Gallop like a horse."* Use a drum beat as background rhythm as children do the motions.

Take cues from children, look back to your own memories, adapt old material to new, and have a good trip with music and movement.

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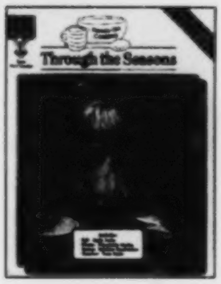

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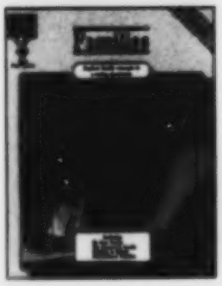

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by Lisa Lyons Durkin and Deborah E. Dixler
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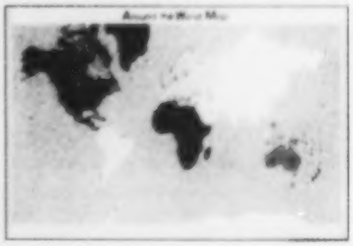

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Around the World Greetings
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Ciao

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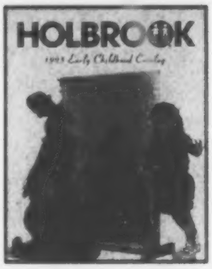

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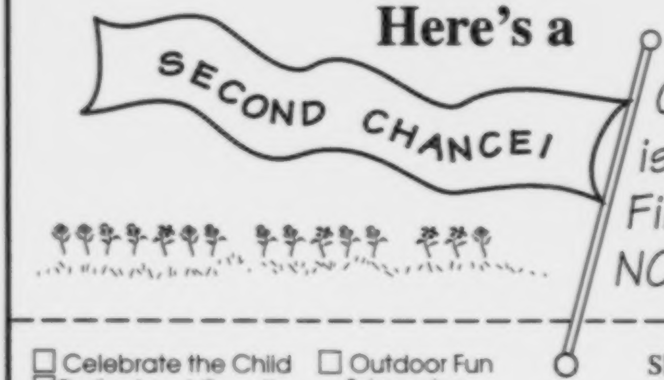
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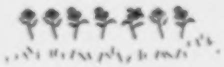

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CONTENTS

FEATURES:

Learning Goes Out.. 6
Outdoor Props and Equiptment.................................... 8
A Safe Summer... 10
Circle Time in the Sun.. 14
Language and Lemonade.. 15
Outdoor Alphabet... 16
Create a Town... 17
Outdoor Math.. 18
Beach Party.. 22
Nature's Sweet Sounds.. 24
Move on Out... 25
Parachute Play.. 26
The Words of Art... 27
Garden Art... 28
Natural Questions.. 30
Stone Sweet Home.. 31
Picnic Fare... 35

DEPARTMENTS:

HELPFUL HINTS: Plan for Fun.................................... 5
TODDLER TIME: Search and Learn............................ 12
OUTDOOR FUN: Play yard Camping........................... 19
IN THE BOOK CORNER:
  Just Outside Your Door... 32
  The Patterns of Summer...................................... 34
  Picnic Fare... 35

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

by Lisa Lyons Durkin

Except if you live in those very warm climates where outdoor learning takes place in the winter (in which case you'll want to put this issue away until six months from now), it's definitely time to move your classroom outside! Move your learning centers into the fresh air and get ready for memorable experiences.

Safety first—and so we start off with a number of possible health hazards and other dangers that you don't normally think about in the classroom—and how to prevent them. Check out your outdoor equipment carefully and often. Summer is a time for relaxation, but you can only be relaxed if you are prepared for emergencies.

This issue of *First Teacher* will show you how to weave the wonders of nature and outdoor fun into all areas of your curriculum. Start with circle time outside. A change of setting can lead to new creativity. Susan Mills give you some great ideas for developing language skills and helping children appreciate nature with all of their senses. Just as children can play with words, they can also "experience" the alphabet outdoors. Your older children will be on their way to reading as they match a giant S with the swing or the slide.

Basic math concepts come alive in the playground! Why not have a shape scavenger hunt on a sunny day or "guesstimate" the number of flowers in the garden? Of course your science lessons will thrive in the sunshine—or the warm, summer rain. You can help children discover a whole new world under a rock in the yard.

The arts will thrive in the out-of-doors! Susan Entz makes some wonderful suggestions about creating musical instruments from natural materials—activities that combine music, problem-solving, and science. There are movement games that benefit for wide, open spaces—especially those that involve a parachute. Garden art is the theme of an article by Jeannine Perez—everything from pressing flowers to popsicle-stick hanging planters to "herb sweets" made with mint or violets.

How about turning your class or the whole center into a "camp in the woods"? It can be done, outdoors or inside, with some imagination and creativity. Gail Jones will show you how. And Sherry Burrell will tell you how to whisk your children away for a day at the beach without ever leaving the classroom.

So put on your sunscreen, grab your straw hat, and head for outdoor learning adventures.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

- *Connie Venier* is the mother of two young boys, four and eight years old. She has run a babysitting service and a volunteer assistant in her son's preschool class in Newport, MI. A graduate of the Institute of Children's Literature, Connie shares some of her creative teaching ideas in the articles she writes.
- *Barbara Backer* is busy writing and giving workshops for early childhood educators. Among the magazines that feature her articles: *Crayola Kids, Highlights fir Children, Fantastic Flyer*, and *Guideposts for Kids*—and, of course, *First Teacher*. Also she is appearing on a local TV public affairs program once a month with suggestions for parents of pre-schoolers.
- *Dr. Margery A. Kranyik* teaches methods classes and supervises student teachers at Bridgewater State College in MA. She also does workshops with child care providers and early childhood teachers. A longtime *First Teacher* contributor, Margie is also the author of Walk, Wiggle, and Wave (First Teacher Press), a best-selling book on creative movement.

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HELPFUL HINTS

PLAN FOR FUN

by Gail P. Jones

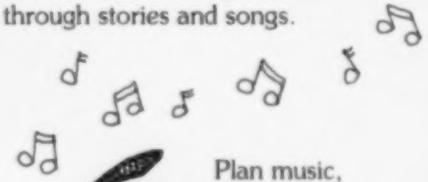
Outdoor learning is not only fun but easy when you and your children brainstorm all the ideas in each area of the curriculum. Make written plans using what children know and what they want to learn more about. Ask children how they could learn more about numbers outside. What shapes and colors will they find?

Set up rules with children for outdoor play areas and how each should be used. Discuss the other safety precautions needed such as sun visors or sunglasses, sunscreen, and insect repellent. Be sure to get parental permission before using these. Discuss other safety ideas such as "buddies" and "freezing when asked to."

Plan centers for all areas of the curriculum just as you would indoors; decide on appropriate places that will appeal to children. You can have a reading cave, a nature nook, or a math meadow!

Plan for lots of "messy" play. Decide beforehand about cleaning up, safety rules, and numbers of children allowed to participate at a given time. Let children put their ID cards in an appropriate number of pockets at a "messy" center.

Look for daily changes in the weather, plants, and the environment. Record the observations in a daily journal or log that can be illustrated and expanded through stories and songs.



Plan music, movement, and large motor activities that utilize old favorite games, adapting them to having no losers or winners. Invite parents and grandparents to teach some of their "memorable games." Use jump rope jingles and play "Kick the Can"!

Use animals and insect life to teach social and emotional skills to children. Let them watch a colony of ants working together toward a common goal.

Record activities with stories and photos and share them with the local newspaper and community bulletin boards. Build self-esteem and foster good public relations at the same time.

Plan for fun ways to have snacks and lunch such as using backpacks, having a picnic, making string hiking necklaces, and using canteens.

Make your goal one of protecting, appreciating, and learning about the environment in all experiences.

LEARNING GOES OUT

by Karen Stephens

The same "basics" of classroom learning center development apply to outdoor learning centers. Items in an area should relate to one another; toys should be "hands-on"; learning center items should appeal to the five senses; play areas should be geared to children's age, abilities, and size; play items should be stored in an organized fashion and displayed attractively; and of course, learning centers should be safe.

Following are some ideas to stimulate your imagination. Some of the learning centers suggested can be left outside overnight. Others you will want to keep on wheeled carts (such as utility carts) or wagons so they can be pulled in and out of an outdoor storage shed or the classroom if necessary.

ART OUTDOORS

- In a protected area, set out **paint easels**. One-sided paint easels can be hung on chain link fences using two "S" hooks fitted into holes drilled in the top of the easel. If you don't have an easel to bring outside, use clothespins to hang easel or butcher paper on chain-link fencing. Group murals or individual pictures can be painted in this manner.
- A small table or picnic table can become a **collage area**. Plastic milk crates, stacked together and attached using rope or pipe cleaners can be used to create shelving to hold materials such as scissors, glue, paper, and collage materials.
- **Drawing areas** can be created by providing chalk or water-based markers. Use these to decorate sidewalks and driveways. Large sheets of butcher paper can be used to draw group murals. Pieces of bark naturally shed from birch and sycamore trees. Children can use them for drawing or writing, just as early Native Americans did.
- Your chain-link or wood rail fence can also be used for **art weavings**. Children can collect natural items such as leaves or dry stems and weave them in and out of links to create patterns. Strips of cloth, crepe paper, or tinsel can also be used for weavings.

DRAMATIC PLAY OUTDOORS

Use outdoor play structures to capitalize on children's interest in dramatic play.

- Do you have a wooden bridge on your climbing structure? Act out "The Three Billy Goats Gruff." Climbing structures with fire fighter poles are great for dramatic play. Collect **prop** materials for any of the following themes: forest ranger, veterinarian, garbage collector, bus driver, construction worker, archaeologist, farmer, etc.
- Provide water, soap, hose, rags, and buckets and children can play **"car wash"** as wagons and Big Wheels come through their "business." Let children use a cash register and make play money for "tokens."
- The **sandbox** is a great area for dramatic play. Provide plastic dinosaurs, farm animals, or kitchen utensils to set the stage!

BLOCK PLAY OUTDOORS

- **Large hollow blocks**—plastic or wooden—are great for making BIG block buildings outside. Add a variety of accessories to make the block play more interesting: old car tires, splinter-free wooden planks, etc. Children can use the blocks to create buildings and obstacle courses for Big Wheels.
- **Large waffle type block panels** are great for making houses and castles. Let children use **plastic milk crates** to create huge forts.
- In a grassy area, a blanket can be placed on the ground and **small table blocks** provided. Accessories such as plastic farm animals, sea creatures, people, or transportation vehicles stimulate more complex play. Let children be creative with

some of these items: empty paper towel cardboard rolls, plastic berry baskets, etc.

SCIENCE AND MATH

- Create a **"wind center"** by hanging windsocks, streamers, kites, windchimes, and whirligigs from a play yard tree. Place a weather vane nearby. Set up a clothes washing station for dolls' play clothes. Let children wash clothes and then hang them from a clothesline. How does the wind help dry the clothes?
- Create a **backyard nature habitat** in your play yard. Place a bird feeder and bird bath in a secluded area. Observe this area everyday.
- **Water and bubble play** can be an everyday experience when a water table is provided. If you don't have a water table, provide large plastic wash tubs, or individual dishwashing tubs. Add accessories to the water table, such as funnels, water wheels, graduated plastic measuring cups, etc.

For simple bubble-making, provide bubble solution in empty orange juice cans for each child. Also provide one straw per child. Children can use a variety of items for dipping into dish pans of bubble solutions: plastic rings that hold pop cans into six-packs, plastic berry strainers, wire hangers, bent pipe cleaners, cookie cutters, etc.

- Create a **color corner**. Include a prism. Can children make a rainbow? Can they make a rainbow from the spray of a water hose? Provide color paddles for children to look through. Set out kaleidoscopes. Put out old muffin tins so children can sort rocks or flowers of different colors. Hang colored cellophane on fencing or over windows for children to look through. Provide plastic containers, food coloring, water, and plastic eye droppers for children to experiment with.
- **The collectors' corner** can be an area where children collect nature items and put them on display. Items may include: leaves, rocks, fossils, seeds, flowers, etc.- anything children might take an interest in collecting. (A revolving display case for watches is perfect for containing and viewing collections.)

TABLE GAMES AREA

In an area sheltered from the wind, table games can be played outside. Be sure to place this area in a shaded spot without excessive sun glare. A blanket, picnic table, or card table provides a good playing surface. Individual puzzles can be put together on portable TV trays or bed trays.

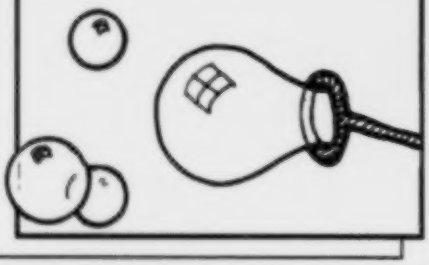
"BUBBLE SOLUTIONS"

BUBBLES 1:

Mix one part Ivory Liquid and three parts water. Some people add glycerin (available at your drugstore) to make the bubbles stronger, but that isn't necessary.

BUBBLES 2.

Using a plastic dishpan, a jelly roll pan, or a cafeteria tray, pour in just enough water to cover the bottom. Pour one cup of Joy Liquid over the water. Add more water and Joy as the solution is used so there is always a thin layer of solution on the bottom of the container.



OUTDOOR PROPS AND EQUIPMENT

by Barbara F. Backer

"Come on, guys! The beast is over here." Corey and his four-year-old friends gallop across the play yard then crawl through a large tire. Kedrick kneels on the other side, growling and gnashing his teeth.

"We've got him. Let's tie him up and throw him in the dungeon," Corey directs.

The friends wrap imaginary ropes around their gently fierce prey and triumphantly lead him to imprisonment under the sliding board.

Observe children playing outside, and you'll be able to make long lists of educational terms to describe what's happening: social growth, language development, building of leadership skills, physical development, and more. But, the children know what's really important. They're having fun!

We can enhance their learning by providing the best equipment and props to support their play. "Best" doesn't translate into the most dollars spent. It means safe, multipurpose, and creative.

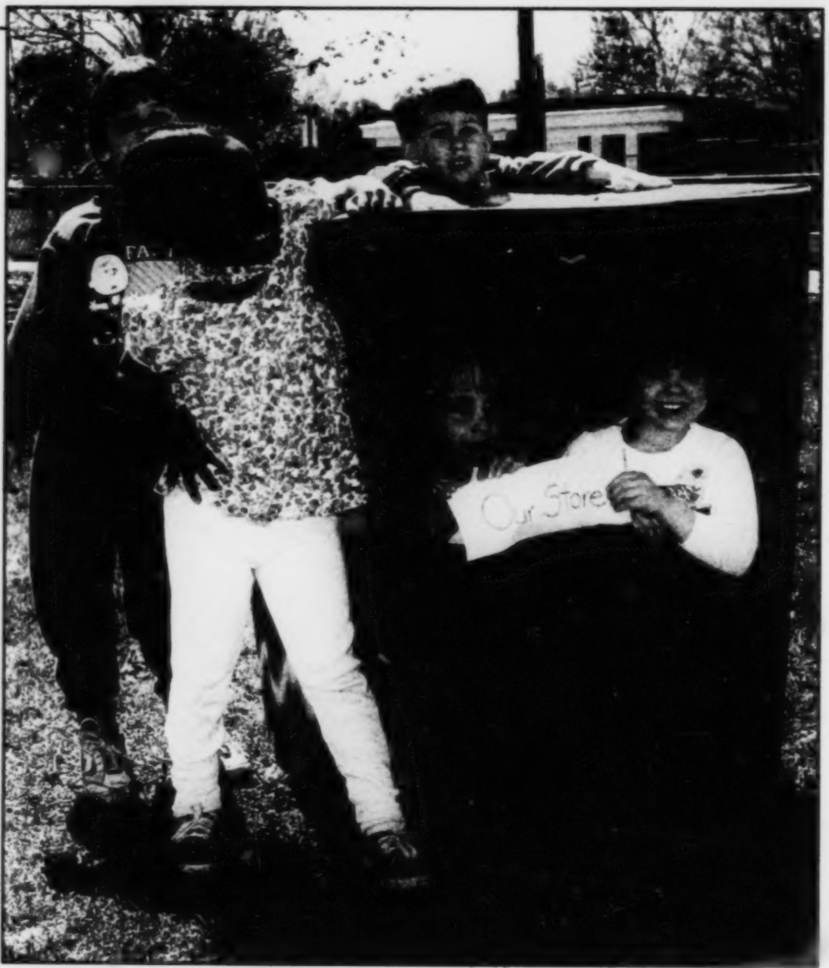
EQUIPMENT

Equipment is the big, permanent stuff like swings and climbing structures. If money allows, invest in several sturdy pieces. Safety is the key word. Examine carefully to be sure there are no sharp edges and no places that can pinch fingers. Look for rust-proof, non-splintering materials. Choose strap seats for swings. They stay cool in direct sunlight, and they cause less injury if a young child runs in front of the moving swing and is hit by it.

Choose equipment and props that can be used in more than one way. Open-ended equipment leads to socialization and creative thinking. Children sitting side-by-side on a swing may be talking together, but children scaling a climber have more interaction. They engage in creative thinking, cooperative play, and social interaction as they call out, *"Catch that lion!" "Call the police!" "Swim over here, mermaids!"*

PROPS

Props are the smaller, temporary, changeable items that encourage and enhance children's play. **Rug squares** can become magic carpets, fish ponds, parking lots, a giant's stepping stones, or fields for galloping ponies. A strip of **paper** folded and taped around a belt loop become an animal's tail. Tied around the waist, it becomes a Super Hero's power belt. Large pieces of paper folded into various shapes become hats for firefighters, marching musicians, or explorers.



Balls of all sizes encourage running, individual competition, and group cooperation. Two children tossing a beach ball back and forth build language, physical, and social skills. At Thanksgiving, children chasing a ball around the yard may pretend they are trying to capture a turkey. At another time, the same ball may be a dinosaur's egg that's rolling away from the paleontology team.

Bring paper and markers outside so children can make **simple signs and labels.** Place a "dungeon" sign under the climbing equipment, or "under the sea" at the end of the sliding board. On another day, bury seashells, pebbles, or small plastic toys in the sand and post a "treasure" sign at the sandbox. Challenge older children to bury the treasure again and draw a treasure map for another class.

Label your garden "Mr. MacGregor's Garden." Or let a sign designate the monkey bars as "Troll's Bridge," and watch the drama unfold. Yellow squares of paper or cloth leading to an area labeled "Oz" will spark other ideas.

Never pass up an **empty carton or cardboard packing box**. Furniture, office supply, and grocery stores are generous with these props. Tape the boxes closed for use as huge building blocks, or open all flaps and tape them together in a long tunnel. Children love to hide inside.

Cut openings in large boxes for playhouses, bear caves, and space ships. Use detachable labels, because today's Three Little Pigs' house will tomorrow become Red Riding Hood's grandma's house.

Clothing props are fun, but always keep safety in mind. Avoid items that tie around the neck. Keep strings, yarn, and rope far from the playground. Loose ties and floppy clothing can become caught on play equipment as children move through them causing serious injury.

Most school accidents happen outside, and sixty percent of playground injuries are the result of falls. Check to see that your play yard's surface absorbs impact. For information about safe playground equipment and surfaces, consult with commercial companies that sell outdoor equipment or write: The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission; Washington, DC 20207. Request their "Handbook For Public Playground Safety."

Help parents and other teachers understand that learning doesn't stop when you open the doors. With proper equipment, props, and support for children's creative play, learning is as big as all outdoors.

A SAFE SUMMER

by Karen Stephens

Warm weather is a welcome event in any early childhood program. With the freedom and luxury of longer periods of outdoor play, comes a few more safety considerations teachers and directors have to plan. Following are issues to consider to make sure all your summer outdoor play is fun and safe for children.

DRINKING WATER

In warm weather, active play means children are more likely to perspire. Loss of fluids can lead to dehydration, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke. To prevent these serious threats to children's health, be sure children have ready access to water. They should be frequently reminded to drink fresh water, even if it is small amounts. Before warm weather arrives, make sure your outdoor water fountain is in good working order. If you don't have a fountain, there are other options. You can have a thermos of cool water on hand outside with a tray of unbreakable glasses (labeled with children's names) or single use paper cups. (A thermos of water and paper cups should be taken along on any extended walking trips where water may not be accessible.) Another option for providing water is to hook up an outdoor hose. Do not let children drink directly from the hose; too many germs are passed this way. Even with the hose, use drinking glasses.

One option I DO NOT recommend is providing children with ice cubes to suck on instead of providing fresh drinking water. The danger of choking on the cubes is NOT worth the risk! Popsicles are not a good substitute for plain water either.

PROTECTION FROM DIRECT SUN

Long periods in direct sunlight can lead to sunstroke and sunburns in young children. All children, but especially those who are light haired and fair skinned, need to learn how to care for themselves to prevent skin cancer. Consider the following ideas.

❐ Apply sunscreen to children before going outdoors to play. Re-apply as needed for children who perspire heavily. (Children can learn to apply sunscreen to themselves as well.) Ask parents to send sunscreen of their choice to school. Be sure to have each bottle labeled with the child's name. Keep the sunscreen in a basket so it can be carried to the play yard easily. Arrange the bottles alphabetically for quick retrieval. (Some children are allergic to certain types of sunscreen. It is best to let parents make the decision on brand and level of protection to provide their child with.)

❐ Washable hats are good to wear during prolonged periods of play. Hats should be light colored and cotton or straw-like for coolness.

❐ Bed sheets can be draped over clotheslines or picnic tables to give children opportunities to play in shaded areas. A cotton or plastic sheet canopy over the sandbox area reduces heat and sun glare for children as they dig and build.

❐ When planning landscape improvements to your play yard, plant shade trees such as maples, oaks, or hickories. Building improvements can include an open or screened-in overhang extension from the building. Small structures such as gazebos, playhouses, or large arbor trellises, such as those used by greenhouse nurseries, are great for filtering direct sun.

SANITATION

As children spend more time outdoors, chances for spreading and acquiring germs outside increases as well. Here are some tips to reduce the chances!

❐ Put a cover over sandboxes at the end of the day so neighborhood cats, dogs, rabbits, squirrels, raccoons, or opossum

Safety Rules for Children

- Wheel toys belong on cement; people on the grass.
- Walk far around swings when people are using them.
- Hold onto swings with both hands; always stay sitting on your bottom.
- Tell a teacher if you find a broken toy, glass, or stinging insect such as a bee or ant.
- Slide down the slide feet first.
- Tell the teacher if the slide is too hot to slide on. (Note: You can then water the slide down or provide towels for sliding on. Shiny metal slides facing south are very prone to getting hot enough to burn.
- Use two hands whenever climbing the climbing tree or jungle gym.
- Sand is for digging and building with; it may not be thrown.

cannot leave feces in the box.

☐ Put fresh water in the water table daily. Children should thoroughly wash their hands before and after playing in the water table. (Some programs add about a capful of detergent bleach to the water to counteract germs. Ask your local health department if they think this is effective in preventing germs that cause contagious diseases.)

☐ Do not put children in diapers in wading pools. Put new water in children's pools daily. Playing in sprinklers is more sanitary than playing in pools, and just as much fun.

☐ Keep a box of facial tissues outside for easy access. Children have runny noses all times of the year.

SAFETY INSPECTIONS

Depending on your location, you may have more or less of a chance of having an unsafe play yard due to littering or vandalism. Check daily for broken glass, half empty beer bottles, and the like. Continually check climbing equipment for splinters or jagged metal. Make sure all wheeled toys are in good working order.

Be sure to inspect the natural environment of your play yard. Do you have bushes or shrubs that might have poisonous berries? If so, replace them with a non-toxic substitute. Check for bee hives or stinging ants that are too near children's play spaces. (Some children may be allergic to bee stings; these can be fatal in severe cases.)

FIRST AID KITS

A first aid kit should be available for outdoor use. It is very handy to fill a fanny-pack with basic first aid materials (including one-time-use plastic gloves.) This leaves your hands free during outdoor play and is easy to take along on neighborhood walks or field trips.

REMIND CHILDREN OF BASIC SAFETY RULES

As you increase time spent in outdoor play, be sure to go over basic outdoor safety rules during your group time. It is always best to tell children what they CAN do by putting rules in a positive format. Try some of the rules above.

BE PREPARED FOR ACCIDENTS

Even in the best programs, accidents and mishaps do happen. It is best to be prepared for such emergencies. Be sure at least one person who has a first aid certificate and is CPR certified is on the premises at all times. (Ideally you would have at least one person per class.)

If you have a pool in your play yard, it should be fenced in with a lock. Whenever the pool is in use, a certified life guard should be on duty. (Teachers can get such certification.) If you visit a community pool, classroom teacher/child ratios should be maintained at all times during pool play. (Better yet, improve your ratios by inviting volunteers along for the fun!)

Now that you've covered all your safety bases, you'll have a great outdoor play season!

TODDLER TIME

SEARCH AND LEARN

by Jeannine Perez

Toddlers have all the characteristics of dedicated scientists. They are naturally curious, eagle-eyed, and they have no pre-digested thoughts. They absorb experiences and ideas so quickly that it may be called sponge learning. Use their enthusiasm to learn together about nature this summer.

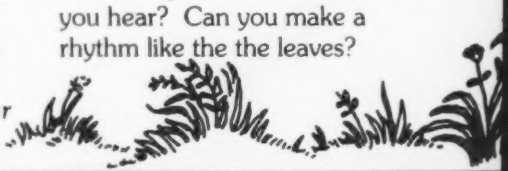
This article gives no suggestions for elaborate activities or field trips, but suggests that we all look again at familiar settings and try to make the most of stay-at-home ideas. Take advantage of toddler curiosity, their need to explore, and try to help them connect the familiar to new experiences.

USE YOUR SENSES

During a quiet time of the day, stake out a circle of ground, using a length of rope, twine, a belt, or a jump rope. With children, look quietly and closely at the area you've enclosed. Notice the tiny community that is busy within your boundaries. What colors, shapes, textures, and live critters do you see? Look at the tiny examples of wildlife you can see, and then take a magnifying glass to look at even tinier life forms.

Plan an outdoor snack that's a sensory experience. When did you last REALLY "experience" a strawberry? For this snack, you need time and children who are hungry, but not so hungry that they cannot "savor a strawberry"! Sit in a comfortable circle with your children and tell them that this snack will last a long time because they will use their eyes, nose, fingers, ears, and tongue to enjoy it. Give each child a large strawberry with its stem, and caution them not to eat it yet. First ask children to carefully hold the strawberry and close their eyes. Say: *"Sniff. Smell the strawberry. Do you like the smell? Open your eyes. Now, hold the strawberry very gently by its stem and look at the pattern of the leaves. How many leaves does your strawberry have? Pull off the stem. Look at your strawberry again. What kinds of words can you use to tell us how it looks?"* Ask children to predict what will be found in the middle of the strawberry. *"What color will you see? Do you think there will be seeds inside? Now you can bite your strawberry in half. Does the inside look the way you thought it would? Put the strawberry in your mouth and make your tongue go all around it before you chew it up. How does it taste?"* By this time you will probably have children with red juice dribbling over hands and face. (This is a finger-licking activity!) Give children crackers and something to drink, and ask them if they are enjoying their snack in the sun. If this was fun, repeat the experience with an apple or other fruits, and talk about the similarities and differences between the fruits.

Read *Too Much Noise* by Ann McGovern (Trumpet Club), and make up your own story about distracting noises inside (perhaps the sounds of fans, outside traffic, squeaky doors, footsteps, etc.). Go outside. Lay back on the grass and listen to nature's noises. Can you hear leaves swishing? What other sounds do you hear? Is there a rhythm to the sounds you hear? Can you make a rhythm like the the leaves?



Some of our best activities cost nothing. Play Follow the Leader. Walk around your play yard. Touch something that is sun-warmed; then touch another object in the deep shade. Dip your hands in a bucket of water and wave them through the air until they dry. Touch a flower petal gently; then touch rough bark. Look up, then down. Smell pine needles and then flowers.

Sit on the ground and pass around containers of dry sand and moist dirt. Ask your toddlers to smell and touch the sand and dirt, to pick up a handful of each, and to squeeze their hands tightly closed.

Compare and contrast whenever possible. Toddlers do not have enough age and experience to compare seasons, but you can compare days. *"Is it cloudy today? Do you remember if there were clouds yesterday?"* Predict. *"Do you think it will rain tomorrow?"*

Toddler-sized gardens grow quickly in ordinary containers. Plant a container garden and set it in the sun. Ask children to help fill the containers with potting soil. Smell the dirt as it's crumbled between fingers and measured. Plant with beans or corn for speedy sprouting. (Be sure the seeds are not treated seeds if they are to be handled by children.) Almost any container will work as a planter. One of our best gardens grew up, out, and down from an old garbage can." We weighted it down with about two feet of rock and sand for safety and good drainage, added good top soil, and planted with all kinds of seeds!

When taking walks or playing outside, point out only a few things. Let children explore, discover, and point out interesting things to you.

Reinforce observation skills by staging a scavenger hunt. Make a list of items that are not too hard to find, and find them together as a group. If your hunt takes place on a walk, remind children that we pick up only what we've grown, and we always leave our trail better than we found it. Items can be pointed out or (if litter) picked up. Ask them to find:

- *something soft*
- *something shiny*
- *something bumpy*
- *a feather*
- *an interesting stick*
- *something round*
- *a seed*

Sing a song with your children to sharpen observation skills. Use the tune of "Frere Jacques";

Look around you,
Look around you,
What do you see?
What do you see?
Jason sees a ....
Mary sees a ....
I see you
And you see me.

CIRCLE TIME IN THE SUN

by Tania Kourempis-Cowling

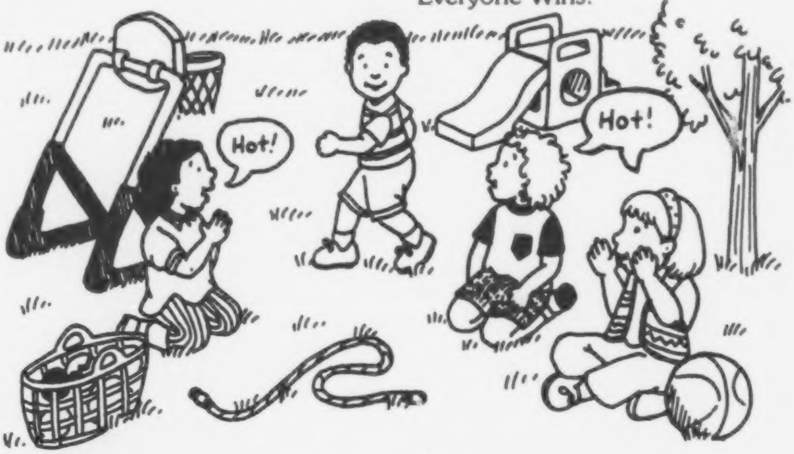
The summer months are a perfect time to take "circle time" outdoors. This change of setting can lend itself to a variety of fun activities.

Choose a comfortable place to set out carpet mats or spread down an old sheet to sit on. Consider keeping circle time fairly short each day, as children's attention span is brief, or you can spread out two circle times during one day.

Here are a few activities to add to your traditional songs, stories, and chants.

"Show and Tell" Riddle Game Give each child a small lunch bag. While outdoors, have her find a special object that she would like to share and put this into the bag. Now, go around the circle, one child at a time, letting the child give clues to the other children. Have them guess the contents of the bag.

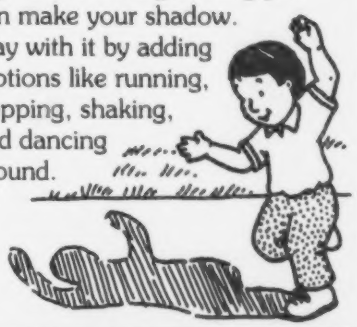
Hot and Cold Game Have one child leave the circle for a moment. Decide with the other children, an object to be "it." Invite the child to walk around the area. Everyone in the circle will shout out "hot" when the child gets close to the object and "cold" when he is far from it. It's a fun, traditional game!



Imaginary Trip Play the trip game by imitation. Choose a destination and begin by pretending to do things needed for the trip. Have children imitate the leader as she packs her suitcase, gets on the train, plane, or auto; acts like a tourist visiting sights; etc. Serve a special snack and discuss how much fun you are having on vacation!

Musical Squares Place carpet squares around the circle or even sheets of colored construction paper. Play some music on the cassette player and have children walk around the circle. When the music stops, let children scurry to find a square. Remove a square each time and continue playing until all the children are piled together on just a few squares. Everyone Wins!

Shadow Dancing On a sunny day, go outside and experiment with shadow dancing. See how big or long you can make your shadow. Play with it by adding motions like running, hopping, shaking, and dancing around.



LANGUAGE AND LEMONADE

by Susan G. Mills

The hot, lazy days of summer invite you to curl up with a good book or write in a journal or diary. At home, you would be relaxing with a good book and sipping a cool drink.

You can do exactly that with your preschool class. The recipe is easy! Take a big pitcher of lemonade, a few good books, a chart tablet and markers, a blanket, some cups, and your children. Head out the door to a shady spot on a patio, under a tree, or any shady place where you can get away from the play equipment.

Have each child find a personal space so he can relax. Pour everyone a cold drink. Start by reading *Wild Wild Sunflower Child Anna* by Nancy White Carlstrom (Macmillan). This marvelous book is great fun to read over and over again. Its sing song rhythm and Anna's crazy adventures are a sure hit.

After reading the book aloud to children, talk about what they liked. Act out a portion of the poem together. It could be running, jumping, climbing, tumbling, or spinning.

Settle back down and talk about what children like to do outside. Let each child share something special from his own outdoor play experiences. You can write these thoughts and ideas down on the chart tablet. Use quotation marks and write exactly what each child says. Read the sentences back to children as you go along.

This project may take several sessions if your group is large. It is quite all right to do this activity over again, adding to the chart each time you do it. As you read aloud, the repetition will help children become familiar with the rhythm of the words. Many children will want to follow along as you point out the words and say them together. Use this kind of activity often to encourage play with language. The goal is to help children expand their vocabularies as they explore the out-of-doors. This is an important step in reading readiness, the realization that the spoken word can be recorded and read by others.

Making lists is fun too. Write down all the things children can think of to do in a tree or in the grass. Look at the sky and describe what you see. Listen to sounds around you and list what you hear.

The lists can be used to create poetry like a cinquain or lanterne. A **cinquain** is a short poem consisting of a noun, two adjectives, three action words, a statement of four words, or four more adjectives, and a synonym. For example:

Breeze
Warm, gentle
Whistles, tickles, blows
Sending smells of summer
Wind.

A **lanterne** has five lines which contain the following number of syllables respectively, 1, 2, 3, 4, 1. The poem's shape is a Japanese lantern. For example:

The
sun is
beautiful
in the clear blue
sky.

So go ahead, relax with your class and go on a language expedition. It's wonderful to pass the time on a hot day with friends, books, and writing.

Here are more language rich books to taste:

- *A Million Chameleons* by James Young (Little, Brown)
- *One Crow, A Counting Rhyme* by Jim Aylesworth (Harper and Row)
- *Over in the Meadow* Illustrated by Ezra Jack Keats (Scholastic)
- *Tikki Tikki Tembo* retold by Arlene Mosel (Holt, Rinehart and Winston)

OUTDOOR ALPHABET

by Karin-Leigh Spicer

Traditionally, we think of learning the alphabet as an indoor pre-reading activity but it can be done outdoors as well.

▶ First, there are many children's books that can bring variety to learning the *ABC's*.

- *Alligator Arrived with Apples* by Crescent Dragonwood (Aladdin Books) describes a funny Thanksgiving feast.
- *Q is for Duck* by Mary Elting and Michael Folsom (Clarion) is an alphabet riddle game.
- *The Z Was Zapped* by Chris Van Allsburg (Houghton Mifflin) is a twenty-six act play performed by the "Alphabet Theater."
- *Animalia* by Graeme Base (Abrams) hides a small boy in each of its elaborate illustrations.
- *The Calypso Alphabet* by John Agard (Henry Holt) uses words heard in the Caribbean Islands.

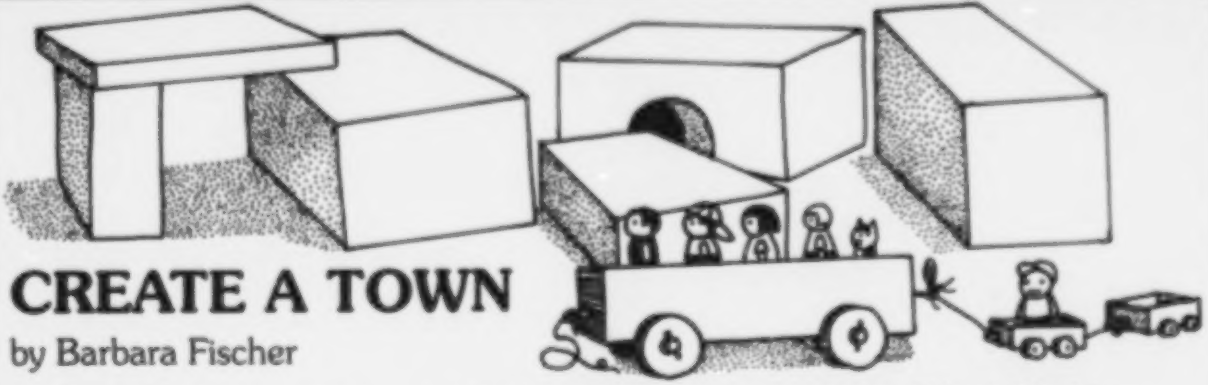
▶ After mastering an alphabet letter, children can search for outdoor objects that start with the given letter. Children can make or teachers can give out construction paper letters (laminated for future use) to tape to the objects. "T" is for tree, table; "S" is for swing, sliding board, or sky. You can take photographs of children standing next to the outdoor object. These photographs are then placed underneath an alphabet chart in the classroom.

▶ On field trips, children can also look for objects starting with a given letter. Bus trips to and from the field trip destination are great for this activity. Young learners can work alone or in teams. You can keep track of all the objects found. How many different objects did children find? Did they find objects similar to those at school? What letter did they find the most objects for? What letter did they find the least objects for? Was there any letter they could not find any outdoor objects for? Can children think of an outdoor object not seen on their trip that would represent the letter? For example, "Z" could be represented by the local zoo or zebra, an animal in the zoo. Did they find any objects that represented more than one letter? For example, car for the letter "C" or automobile for the letter "A." This activity keeps children busy and focused on a task.

▶ When children arrive at their destination, they can continue to look for objects representing letters. Parks, zoos, aquariums, and science museums are filled with a wealth of "objects." You can help children discover the objects by pointing out a few examples. "D" is for dinosaurs or dolphins; "F" is for fossils or fins. Don't forget to make a list of the objects found or take photographs of children standing next to the objects.

▶ Children can also be given a letter and asked to find objects in their own backyards. Parents can help make up a list to bring back to school. Children can also bring to school one of the outdoor objects to share with the class. For example, a pine cone for the letter "P"; a piece of bark for the letter "B." How many different objects did the class find? Did children find objects similar to those at school? Did they find any objects that represented more than one letter?

Outdoor alphabet activities take as much or as little time as you want to spend. They also take little preparation so they can be used whenever extra time is available. These activities increase letter/object recognition as well as expand each young learner's vocabulary.



CREATE A TOWN

by Barbara Fischer

Warm, sunny summer days invite us out of the classroom and into the great outdoors. Put the "drama" back into dramatic play by creating a town right in your own playground.

LET'S PLAN!

Gather children, some Community Helper books, crayons, paper, and masking tape and head for the playground. Locate a firm, level area away from the flow of traffic and near the sandbox, if possible. Begin by asking children what is needed in a town. Print their responses on a large sheet of paper. To start suggestions, you might want to read Gail Gibbon's book, *Trucks* (Crowell). Children might want a fire station, police station, bakery, school, grocery store, and perhaps a farm or two.

LET'S BEGIN!

When it's time for construction, bring out the blocks and/or cardboard boxes and wheel toys. Offer help and encourage questions as children build their structures. Use masking tape to make roads in and around your town. Gail Gibbon's *New Road* (Crowell) offers suggestions and lots of learning, too.

LET'S PLAY!

Encourage children to play fire fighter, police officer, store owner, farmer, or whatever they choose. Ask questions such as: *"Does someone need blocks to build a house?" "Who has a truck to help move those blocks?" "Does a store need something from the farm?" "Can a farmer bring these products to the store?"* Watch children become involved as you ask leading questions.

If you're near the sandbox, help children discover what dump trucks, tractors, and other wheel toys are able to do. Point out the track that encircles the wheels of a tractor. Does this make it easier for wheels to roll over sand? Children will enjoy Tana Hoban's *Dig, Drill, Dump, Fill* (Greenwillow). Can their toys do the same work?

LET'S COME TOGETHER!

At the end of playtime, invite children to come together and discuss what they did. This is a time to try some winding-down, hands-on experiences. Here are a few suggestions.

- Each child might dictate a sentence or two about a fun thing they did during play. These sentences could then be made into a book to take home.
- Is there an airport in town? Uncover the mystery of how an airplane flies with *The Paper Airplane Book* by Seymour Simon (Viking). He shows children how an airplane flies and offers several simple fun experiences with paper. Try this activity from his book. Have children place a sheet of paper flat against their hand. Now ask them to turn their hand over quickly. They will be amazed to feel the air pressure against their hand. This is what helps to keep an airplane from falling to the ground. Take some time to fold and fly paper airplanes.
- Bring out the craft materials and let children make traffic signs, people, and decorations for their town. Set up and clean up is easy. Just designate one or two boxes as "town boxes" to help keep your town materials together ready for play.

If you and your children enjoy this activity, you might want to expand it into an all-summer theme. Have a Bike Day parade. Let children bring and decorate their bikes. Wagons and other wheel toys would add to the fun. Play "Who am I?" by acting out one of the Community Helper roles. How many helpers can children guess?

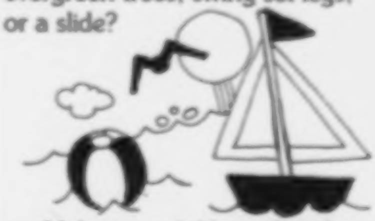
This summer, put new drama into your dramatic play. Then sit back and watch your childen explore the possibilities—they're full of fun and learning!

OUTDOOR MATH

by Donna Bird

The sun is shining. The sky is blue. It's warm and wonderful, so let's take our math lessons outdoors!

First, we'll explore **shapes.** Look around your outdoor play area with children and see how many shapes they can identify. What are the circles? Can they see the round sun, car wheels, a merry-go-round, or round stones? Where are the squares and rectangles? Help them find houses, windows, doors, fences, or a playhouse with those shapes. Can they find any triangles? What about roofs, evergreen trees, swing-set legs, or a slide?



Help your children identify the shapes with which they are most familiar. Then, instead of yet another worksheet, prepare the following game. Using a large sheet of paper, like newsprint, make outline drawings of the various objects children have been identifying, omitting the outline of the shape area. For example, draw the outline of a car, omitting the wheels. Let children fill in the shapes, either by drawing them in if they are able, or gluing on pre-cut shapes you supply. Work on an outdoor table or sidewalk area.

Another outdoor activity could be a "Shape Hunt." Use blocks, or shapes cut from cardboard or foam and hide them around the play area. Place appropriately-sized containers, one for each shape you are using, at the starting area. Mark each container with a picture of the shape that will go into it. Then send everyone off to find one particular shape. With younger children, you may need to discuss the definition of the shape they are looking for and perhaps show them a sample. When everyone has found the first shape, send them off for another. Gently help those who may be having trouble, so that everyone "wins." Variations for this game could include having each child find one of every shape, or with older children, setting up teams each with a different shape to find.

Children can practice **counting and number skills** while outdoors too. Explore your play area with children, counting things as you go. How many flowers in the garden? How many swings? How many cars in the sandbox? Include discussions of more and less while counting. Are there more flowers or swings? Which evergreen has less pine cones under it?

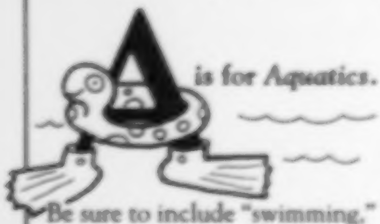
To practice number skills outdoors, make a set of number cards. Give each child a card and let her go find that many items from your play area. You may need to discuss what items are not appropriate and which, like stones and small toys, are. When everyone has returned, have the group count with each child, while that child holds up her number card. You may then want children to put themselves and their items in numerical order. For older children, let them close their eyes while you move around the number cards from each pile of items. Then let them put the number cards back with the correct sets.

But whatever you do, don't miss out on the summer sunshine because of math lessons!

PLAY YARD CAMPING

by Gail P. Jones

Whether you have a blacktop area, an indoor area, or a beautiful woods with a stream, you and your children can have a fantastic camping experience! Your need to create the camping environment inside and outside will depend on your particular situation. Once your environment is complete with rustic signs, maps, and trails marked, use some of the ideas that follow for a multitude of fun learning experiences.



A is for *Aquatics*.

Be sure to include "swimming," "boating," and "fishing activities" in your aquatics program. Other ideas might be pretend scuba diving, water skiing, and lifesaving! You could use the the sand/water table or a small kiddie pool to create a "sloping beach". Add weighted buoys, string to rope off areas, small plastic boats and people!

B is for *"Buddy System"*.

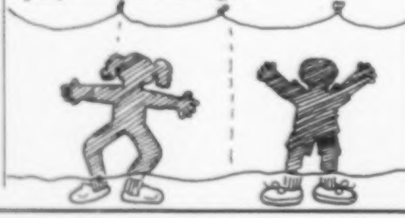
Use the "buddy system" throughout the day to keep a fast count of children while hiking, swimming, etc. At the beginning of the day, each child selects a "buddy." Children are to watch out for their "buddy" and to stay with them. Anytime the whistle blows, the "buddies" hold up hands together.

C is for *Campfire*.

Make your circle area a pretend campfire for group activities. A discarded kiddie pool can be painted and used with blocks covered to look like logs or simply make one in the center of the area with blocks and pretend rocks! Include paper tissue in red, yellow, and orange for flames.

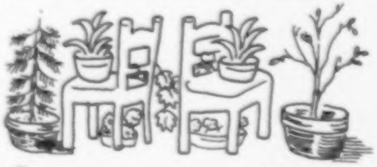
D is for *Dramatics*.

For the dramatics center, be sure to include real camping clothes, etc. for role playing. Also include plenty of dress-up costumes and animals masks. The center might be separated from the campfire area by a sheet on a clothesline so it can be used as a "curtain" for a play or a shadow screen for shadow plays with a flashlight.



E is for *Entrance and Exit*.

Make rustic looking signs for your room or play yard for the entrance and exit. Putting real plants and covering the fronts, sides or backs of furnitures with pretend rocks and bushes, etc. will make the camp entrance look more realistic. See "M" for a map idea to include at the entrance to the camp.

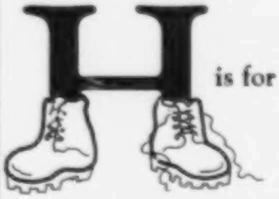


F is for *Fishing*.

Include a magnetic fishing game near the water front area to use in a pretend cardboard rowboat or canoe. A block-made dock would be a fun fishing area also. Include fish with paper clips in the pond as well as some daily *surprise* additions such as an old tire, a boot, or a pair of false teeth!

G is for Green Stick Cooking

Explain to children that dry, brown sticks would soon catch on fire if they were used for cooking over a real fire. Show them the difference between green sticks and brittle ones on a hike. Keep a few small ones in the classroom for pretending to skewer play dough food.



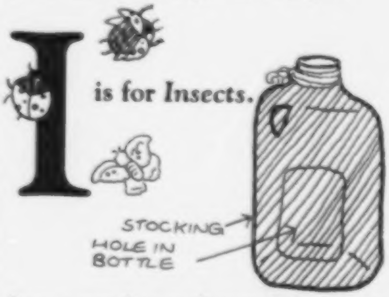
H is for *Hiking.*

Make hiking a daily activity at "camp." Each day, plan a different type of hike with children. Some examples are:

◆ *a nature hike*—looking for specific things in nature such as birds, wildflowers, rocks, etc.

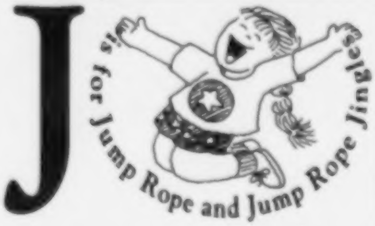
◆ *a scavanger hike*—usually done with two groups as a kind of race, but could be done with one. Each has an envelope with pictures or a list of things to find on the scavanger hike.

◆ *a coin flip hike*—the coin is flipped at each fork in the road to determine whether to go left or right.



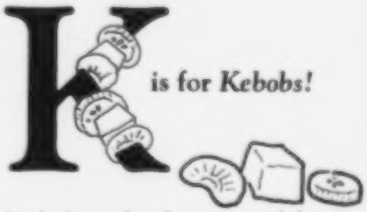
I is for *Insects.*

Leave supplies and posted directions for making an insect cage in the arts and crafts center. Include two-liter soda bottles with a hole cut out on the side of the bottle as shown. Also include markers for decorating and panty-hose cut to size.



J is for Jump Rope and Jump Rope Jingles

This is a fun activity for anytime or, especially on a rainy day. Even if your children are too little to jump, they get great pleasure in watching their teacher/*counselor* jump while they sing the jingle! (Threes and fours can learn to jump over a slowly swinging rope.)

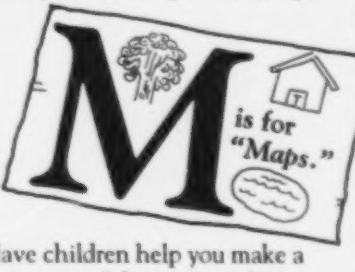


K is for *Kebobs!*

Include cocktail straws and fruit in your "*Mess Hall*" for making fruit kebobs. Challenge children to match the others and to learn patterning: banana, apple, orange, banana, apple, orange, etc.

L is for *"Lean-to".*

Make a *lean-to* as a center area, perhaps for reading or listening.



M is for "Maps."

Have children help you make a large map of the camp on brown paper. This will help introduce the unit and all the upcoming activities as well as make an attractive entrance area to your "camp"! Children can also make maps for the hiking area.

N is for *"News."*

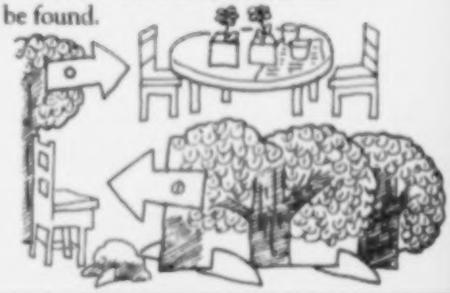
Create a camp newsletter with the children. They could sit down together at the end of each day (around the *campfire*, of course!) and create the newsletter as a means of closure for them and for informing parents of what they did that day. Post it near the "exit" of your camp. Be sure to include blank postcards in the writing center for sending *news* home.

O is for *"Outdoor Cooking!"*

Add new ideas to your campfire and "Mess Hall" centers daily for showing the children the many different ways foods can be cooked outdoors. Include racks, cooking in coals, and skewered foods. Let them pretend with play dough, twigs, and in the sand table for pit or underground cooking.

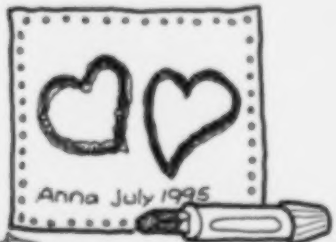
P is for *"Paths!"*

Create paths from center to center by using paper bushes, rocks and trees to cover furniture and paper signs with arrows to indicate the direction where each center can be found.



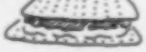
Q is for "Quilt"

Prepare pre-cut 9"x 12" muslin rectangles for each child. They can be decorated by each child with her name and the date. Punch holes around the edges so that they can sew them together as a friendship quilt.



R is for "Roll!"

Have each child bring in a small cotton sheet to use for his bed roll. Let children practice folding and rolling the sheet and securing it with ties or large rubber bands. They will love naptime if they can use their bedrolls and wake up to "reveille" played on a bugle!



S is for Sunbaked S'mores

Let children make *s'mores* by placing a square of a Hershey bar on a square of a graham cracker and topping it with marshmallows. Add another graham cracker square on top. Wrap all in aluminum foil and set out on a hot sunny surface to melt the chocolate! Eat for dessert around the campfire!

T is for "Tents"

Use tents wherever possible for centers and create tent *fronts* to look like tents in your classroom. Ask a creative parent to sew a little pretend tent out of camouflage material so children can use it in the block or small motor area.

U is for "Upside Down Hike."

Take a hike with a clipboard for recording what is found by turning logs, rocks, and leaves upside down on the way. A tape player and a camera could be used also.

V is for "Vegetable Dyes"

Over a period of time, show children different things that might be collected on a hike that could be used for creating dyes. Perhaps, you could boil a few different things at home and bring in the dyes and use them for tie-dyeing. Bark, dandelions, grass, and wildflowers are all good possibilities.

W is for "Weathercasting"

Be sure to include "weathercasting" as a regular daily activity. Let children make weather flags and weather vanes. Put a thermometer and a child-made barometer in the weather station. Keep a report and graph of the weather, cloud types, and forecasts.

X is for "X's" Made in Continuous Lashing.

Use ropes and blocks for your rope tying center. Show children several different ways to lash things together.

Y is for "Yells."

Encourage the children to make up camp mottos and "camp yells" which should resemble cheers and do not need to be actually yelling!

Z is for "Zigzag paths"

Use zigzag paths to create interesting hiking areas in small spaces and for making an indoor area seem more like a camp environment. Use cabinets, hanging plants, and hanging pictures of trees, etc. to create zigs and zags. One center might be in a "Zig" another will be in the "Zag."

BEACH PARTY

by Sherry Burrell

Even if you don't live near a beach, having a beach party can still be fun! When you plan a beach party right in your playground or classroom, children can learn from this exciting experience without even leaving the school.

BEACH BASICS

Many young children have already visited a beach, but some have not. Begin preparing for your beach party unit by finding out what children know about beaches. Ask children what they think a "beach" is. Have them describe their ideas with words that tell about the sights, sounds, tastes, smells, textures, and feelings they have experienced at a beach. It might help to write these words on posters, one for each of the senses. Draw a simple picture at the top of the poster to remind children which sense is being represented.

Often, this first discussion will reveal many misconceptions children have picked up about beaches. For example, some children think that a "beach" can only be next to an ocean (not by a lake, pond, or river). Jot down the informational errors that children have mentioned. Later, plan experiences that will help children learn the facts about beaches.

MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT

Begin gathering the materials and equipment you will need. Magazines provide a good source of "beach pictures" (especially sports/nature/outdoor magazines). Try to find beaches of all sorts, from all over the world and next to many different types of water sources. Next, check out some books at your local library. Choose a few "beach" favorites to read to your children. Consider borrowing an art book of famous seascape paintings from the library to share with children.

Send a note home to parents to inform them of your upcoming theme. Request items such as sand toys, water toys, small plastic people, vehicles and animals, beach umbrellas, and small child-sized, plastic pools. Ask for donations of beach pebbles and shells. Find out if someone could donate or lend a volleyball or badminton set, beach balls, soft frisbees, or other games and toys often associated with "beaches." Invite parents to send in a favorite photo of their family visiting a beach.

Finally, see if someone might donate clean, washed beach sand. This can be purchased at most large hardware or building supply stores. When it's time for the actual "beach party," you'll also ask parents to outfit their children in bathing suits, beach towels, sunglasses, beach hats, beach slippers, and so on.

LEARNING CONCEPTS

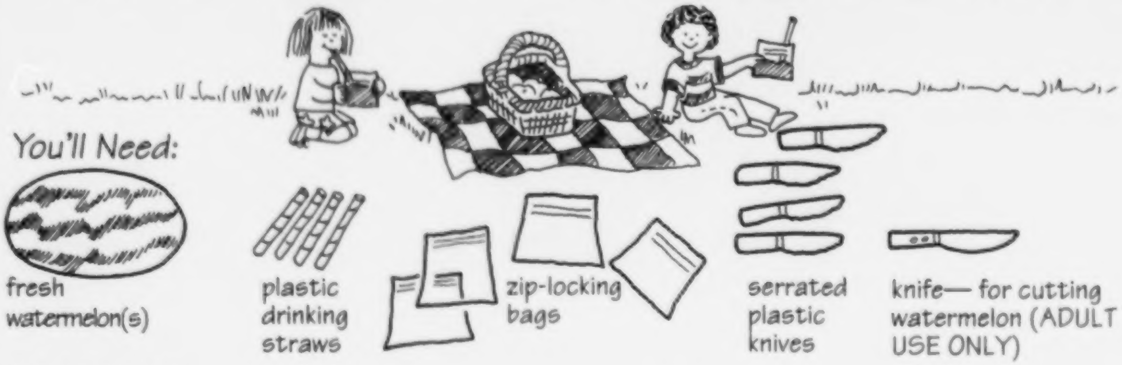
What early childhood concepts are easily applied to the "beach" theme? The ideas are unlimited! Pebbles and shells are used for matching, sorting, counting, one-to-one correspondence, lining up into shapes, glueing together into interesting 3-D designs, or transforming into little "beach critters." There are lots of new vocabulary words to learn: *ocean, sea, pond, lake, river, seaweed, tide, waves, coast, wake, undertow, seagull, pollution, ecology, clam, horseshoe crab, starfish, duck, cattails, tidal pool, barnacles,* etc.

The vocabulary you teach will depend on which books you choose to read, which pictures you show, and which sample items you obtain. Sometimes children become interested in beach birds, fish, beach critters, or boats. Also, many additional words will arise when the "beach party" experience comes to life (*sandy, wet, cold, shivering, splash, molding, sandcastle,*).

There are countless art projects to create with sand (sand designs on glue trails), colored sand (layered sand jars

WATERMELON SLURPS

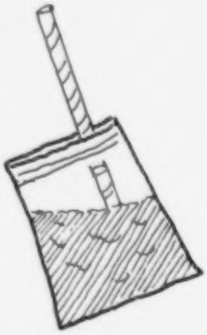
You'll Need:



- fresh watermelon(s)
- plastic drinking straws
- zip-locking bags
- serrated plastic knives
- knife— for cutting watermelon (ADULT USE ONLY)

What to Do:

1. Adult cuts open the chilled watermelon and cuts into one-inch chunks.
2. Adult (with help of children) carefully removes seeds. Children can help cut with plastic knives.
3. Place seedless chunks of chilled watermelon into zip-locking bags.
4. Close all but one small corner of the bag. Insert the plastic straw into the open corner and push it down to the bottom of the bag.
5. Children can now squish the watermelon chunks and sip the juice through the straw.



or sand paintings), water colors or fingerpainting (water scenes), or pebbles and shells (make little creatures). When children play with sand and water and find the best combination for molding the sand into shapes, they will discover how to build sand castles! Since sand castles are inevitably temporary, invite children to transfer their ideas into play-dough afterwards!

PARTY TIME

When it comes time for the actual "beach party," be ready for excitement, a little mess, and a lot of fun! Use child-sized wading pools to create mini-beaches. Fill one with sand and another with water, or take one pool and fill half of it with sand and the other half with water (in a shallow rectangular or plastic pan). Depending on your facility, you may or may not be able to allow children to get wet by actually immersing themselves in the water. If this is possible, children will certainly prefer it! If not, it can still be fun for children to sit on the outside of the pool and play with the "sandy beach and water scene" within their reach.

If children will NOT be getting into the water, then add lots of pebbles and shells to the water and sand, and let children discover, sort, count, collect, and build with them. Either way, invite children to change into bathing suits, lay out on the beach towels, and wear sunglasses and beach hats. Then turn on music from the "Beach Boys," start the beach ball-"volleyball" game, and smile!

Be sure to provide picnic baskets and coolers for beach snacks! Have snack on the ground or floor on the beach towels, and consider sprinkling your snacks with "sand" (a mixture of cinnamon and sugar)!

I admit that when I've had an inside-the-classroom winter beach party, it has required a little extra clean-up, but it was worth it! When the beach party happens in the warmer weather, and can take place outside, clean-up is a cinch, and the fun is limitless. Whether a beach is nearby, or not, have a beach party!

NATURE'S SWEET SOUNDS

by Susan Entz

Nature's sounds abound. Take your class on a nature walk to find natural materials that make interesting sounds. Once each child has an "instrument," sit under a shade tree to sing and play these "natural" rhythm instruments.

A SOUND-FILLED NATURE WALK

Before leaving the classroom, prepare children for the sound walk. Pass around two small pieces of tree bark and ask children to experiment with the sounds they make. When it's your turn, rub them together as you would sand blocks. Sing "Down by the Station," keeping the beat of the song as the train chugs down the track.

Then share the sounds of a small branch with dried, rustling leaves. Ask children to close their eyes and listen to the sound. Have them sing "Rock-a-Bye-Baby" with the branch accompaniment measuring the beat.

Tell the group that they are going outside to look for other natural objects that make interesting sounds. After reminding the group about field trip safety rules, give each child a bag to collect "treasures." Guide the class to places that have a variety of natural materials with good "sound" potential. Possible Finds (depending on location) include:

- Small stone "clappers"
- Small branches for rhythm sticks
- Stick on hollow drum log
- Pine bow shaker
- Willow bow shaker
- Corn husk shaker
- Weed pod shakers
- Clam shell castanets
- Coconut shell drum
- Bamboo sticks

Look for objects that simulate the sounds of the rhythm instruments that are used indoors. Compare the timbre of rhythm sticks to sticks from a fallen branch or a maraca to dried seeds in a pod.

MAKE INSTRUMENTS

Make instruments using natural objects. Pour sand into a small, aluminum pie pan and cover it with a second pie pan; secure the edges with tape; and shake. Repeat with gravel, dirt, small dried leaves, and pebbles. Compare the sounds made by each "shaker." Make other shakers from half-pint milk cartons for new sounds.

NATURE'S ORCHESTRA

Once each child has found or made an instrument from natural materials, have the "orchestra" perform. Sing a well known song accompanied by all of the instruments. Then have all musicians but "drummers" put down their instruments; repeat the song with only the drum accompaniment. Repeat with other groups of instruments. On some verses, just hum the tune softly so children can focus on the sound of the objects they have found.

MOVE ON OUT

by Margery A. Kranyik

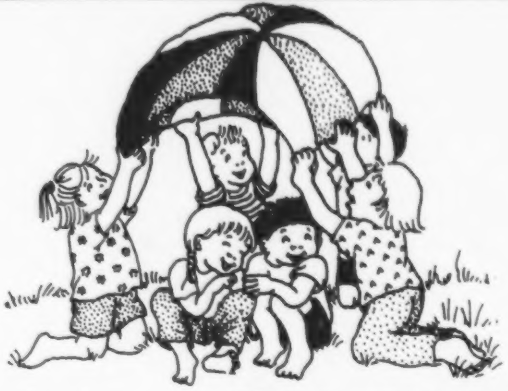
Movement activities do not need to stay in your classroom or large motor room. While the weather is good, move on outdoors!

- Celebrate the change of seasons with a Seasons Festival. Have children make a banner for each season. Learn seasonally appropriate songs to sing with hand made puppets. Take your tape player and rhythm instruments outdoors with you and have a parade. Sing action songs and recite appropriate finger plays. Invite families, friends, and other classes to share in the movement and music.
- Children love animals and most animals live outdoors. Play a variation on Red Rover. Have children assemble in a group with the "leader" positioned in front of the group. The leader says, *"Red Rover, Red Rover, let the elephants come over."* Have children move like elephants up to the leader and run back. (The leader may or may not chase and catch the "elephants"...your decision) The leader calls out other animal names and children move up to the leader and back. Change leaders at appropriate times.
- Read "Sparrow" and "Busy Squirrel" from Eric Carle's *Animals, Animals* (Philomel Books). Have children act out the words. Look for other descriptive animal poems for children to dramatize.
- Make outdoors the setting for your music time. Use songs such as "Little White Duck," "Old MacDonald Had a Farm," "Over in the Meadow," and "Five Little Speckled Frogs" to encourage children's creative movement in a larger space. Children will also enjoy providing vocal sound effects for the songs.
- Take advantage of larger outdoor space and have children practice directionality and action words. Ask them to move *"high, low, sideways, zig-zag, slide, run, walk, jump, hop, skip, twirl."*
- Play old favorite movement games such as "Hokey-Pokey," "Punchinella(o)," "Ring Around the Rosey," "London Bridge," "Farmer in the Dell," "Here We Go Around the Mulberry Bush," "Did You Ever See a Lassie (Laddie or other word choice)?" "Here We Go Looby-Loo," and "One Elephant Went Out to Play." Encourage children to move and take advantage of expanded space. This experience can give an observer the opportunity to see who follows directions and can identify body parts.
- Take your weather theme outdoors. Ask children to make paper plate puppets depicting weather conditions with faces, colors, or other descriptive decorations such as snowflakes or raindrops. With the puppets, have children act out movements to help describe the weather. *"Move like the wind." "Be a snowflake falling to the ground." "Move like a cloud racing across the sky."*
- Play the Ring Game. To play, you will need an embroidery hoop or plastic container cover with the center cut out leaving the outside ring. Tie eight assorted colored strips of yarn or ribbon to the ring. Teach children this song: (Tune: "Row, Row, Row Your Boat")

Walk, walk, walk around,
Walk around and sing.
Place your hands behind your back
And you might get the ring.

(Change motion to *slide, skip, march around*). Have children walk in a circle with hands behind them. One child is "IT" and walks around the outside of the circle, placing the ring in a child's hand. The child with the ring chases "IT" around the circle back to place where the child was given ring. The child now holding ring is "IT."

Think about your favorite indoor activities. Adapt them, add a few props, and move on out!



PARACHUTE PLAY

by Susan M. Root

Parachute play provides opportunities for movement and motor skill development as well as a chance to practice listening skills and cooperative learning. For a group of 10-15 preschoolers, a twelve-foot parachute works well. A fifteen-foot parachute could be handled by a group of kindergartners or a larger preschool group with several adults assisting.

Parachute play indoors or outdoors is most successful if you establish some short routines. Begin by having children form a large circle on the floor or ground. Tell them that the parachute has been "asleep" inside its bag and needs to be awakened gently. Unfold the parachute and have each child grip the edge with fingers on top of the parachute and thumb hiding underneath. You might sing a "Wake-up" song to the tune of "Good Night, Ladies":

Wake-up, parachute,
Wake-up, parachute,
Wake-up, parachute,
It's time for us to play.

Successful parachute activities require good listening skills, the ability to follow directions, and group cooperation. Begin with simple listening activities.

○ **Rainstorm** Begin by gently shaking the parachute as though the wind were beginning to blow some clouds your way. The wind gets stronger and so does the shaking. Then it starts raining, thundering, and lightning with accompanying stronger parachute movements. Slow the activity back down by describing the end of the storm, one step at a time.

This activity develops good upper body strength as well as encourages listening skills and imagination. Often, this activity might be the only one we try on the first day of parachute play. If children are still interested and cooperative, try another activity.

○ **The Bubble** For this activity children should kneel on the ground and practice placing their hands (still holding the parachute) on the ground. Say, *"1-2-3 UP,"* and have everyone lift their arms (not their whole bodies) as high as they can and then bring them back down to the ground. This will trap air in the parachute and create a bubble. It usually takes several tries before the group is successful in creating a bubble that will hold its shape for a short time. Pitfalls include children who do not bring the parachute back down to the ground tightly and thus let air out. Some children get carried away and let go of the parachute. Remind them that everyone needs to work together. Review the steps before you try again.

○ **Hiding in a Tent** A variation of the above activity is to allow two children to lie flat on the ground underneath the parachute. This prompts lots of giggling as children see the shapes of their friends. As a group, make a bubble on the count of 1-2-3, and you now have two friends hiding in a tent. Most children enjoy this activity and sharing the space with a friend makes it even more fun.

○ **Circle Round** Begin with everyone standing in a circle, holding the parachute with their left hands. At your direction, they can walk forward, (jump, skip, run, walk backward) Try chanting *"Walk, walk, walk, walk"* or singing a song to the tune of "Mulberry Bush":

This is the way we walk around,
Walk around, walk around,
This is the way we walk around
At our school today.

When your parachute is "tired," sing a concluding song to end your activity. Use the same tune as your "Wake up" song:

Goodbye, parachute;
Goodby, parachute;
Goodbye parachute,
We've had fun today.

And children will have fun—and learn many skills with a parachute.

THE WORDS OF ART

by Leanne D. Grace

The outdoors provides a wonderful backdrop for perceiving the elements of art. Artists, young and old, use the same ingredients or elements in art production. Colors, value, lines, shapes, textures, and use of space are used to make art. Sometimes we forget art is MORE than making, it also involves "seeing" and talking about what we see.

Here are some ideas for introducing art vocabulary words. The suggested activities are more than just "art projects." None of them involve a great deal of preparation or materials; simply guide children in exploring new ways to see.

COLOR WORDS: names of colors, bright, dark

▲ Find a color you are wearing.

▲ Find another color.

▲ Stand in or outside of a dark/light color.

▲ Where do two colors meet?

VALUE WORDS: light, dark, shadows

▲ Stand inside/outside a shadow.

▲ From what direction is the sun shining? How can you tell?

▲ Trace the shadow outline with any body part (finger, foot, nose).

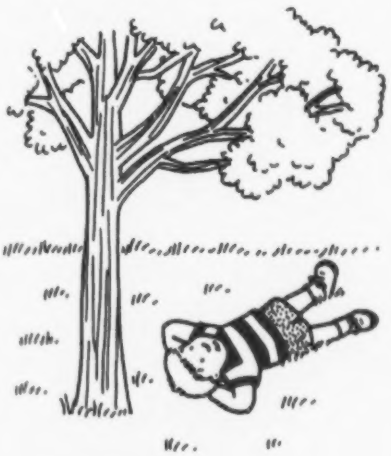
▲ Can you fit your whole body in a shadow?

WORDS FOR LINES: straight, crooked, curved, slanting, thick, thin, edge, smooth, jagged, long, short

▲ Follow a line with your finger, foot (any body part).

▲ Stand where two lines cross.

▲ Lay under a tree and trace its lines with just your eyes. Do you see any letters in its branches?



SHAPE WORDS: square, rectangle, triangle, circle, large, small, flat, round

▲ Stand inside/outside of a shape.

▲ Walk, tiptoe, skip...around a shape.

▲ Lay on your back and "see" shapes in the clouds.

▲ Stand in a space and find two shapes.

▲ How many shapes can you see?

TEXTURE WORDS: soft, fuzzy, rough, smooth, bumpy, hard, slick

▲ Using a piece of yarn, make a circle (or any shape) in the grass. How many textures are in the circle?

▲ Look carefully at a tree or building, find two different textures.

▲ Find something smooth, hard...

SPACE WORDS: far, near, high, wide, deep, close, inside, front, back, middle

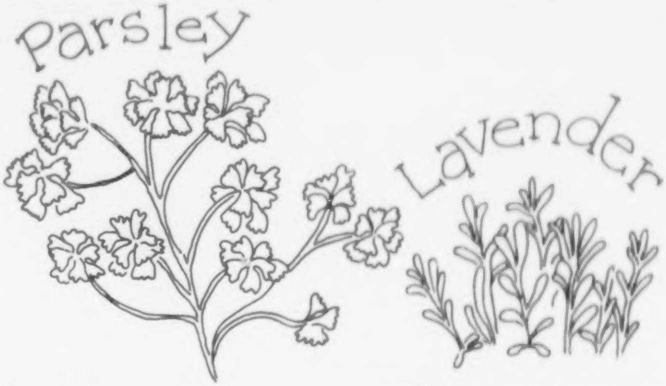
▲ Stand in your yarn shape; name something near, far, in front...

▲ Find a hole. Is it deep? Wide?

▲ Look for something high. Follow it to the top. What is at the top?

When children return to the classroom, continue to use the art words as you comment on their works of art. You can help children recall their outdoor experiences. When drawing a tree or building, ask children to remember what it looked like, how it felt. *"What kind of lines will you use?"*

This outdoor learning activity helps children to "see" and appreciate what we all often take for granted. By taking the time, we all can appreciate the world around us with new eyes.



GARDEN ART

by Jeannine Perez

Plant your own garden or borrow one. It can be an outside plot or an inside sunny window sill. Then create some art.

Children are natural gardeners. They sense the wonder and miracle in the transformation of seeds to plants, and apply their observations, experiences, and experiments to other activities.

Show children some art reproductions that picture gardens, such as Rousseau's lush and mysterious jungles, Van Gogh's bright sunflowers, Manet's garden, O'Keefe's bigger than life blooms, or Cezanne's "Vase of Flowers." Let children practice making still life drawings and outdoor sketches. Help them set up a simple still life of flowers and vegetables on a low table and draw it with chalk, markers, or paint.

Emphasize that we all see things differently and that their pictures will not be the same. On another day, let each child find a place outside to sit quietly and sketch. Hang the pictures with clip clothespins on a rope between trees.

Make hollyhock dolls. Use several blossoms for each doll. One tight bud will be the head. Use a partially opened blossom for the bodice, and a full bloom upside down for the skirt. Fasten them together with toothpicks or florist wire.

Make flower and vegetable puppets with popsicle sticks and pictures children have drawn, or cut them from old seed catalogs.

Make nature papers to enjoy next winter! Begin with slurry made from thumb-sized scraps of paper put in a blender with water and blended. Add the slurry to a dishpan half full of lukewarm water. Float tiny blossoms, leaves, or grass on the paper slurry, and then lift out small sheets of wet paper on squares or ovals of plastic canvas. (Hint: try this before doing it with children. Do not try to use the fine plastic canvas, as water won't drain through. The quarter-inch size works best.) You can also use a piece of wire screening. Drain the new paper a minute, then turn upside down on folded newspapers to dry. (I write each child's name on a paper before they begin, so the process will go smoothly.) Press with a large sponge to soak up excess water. Children will love this step! Pull out the plastic canvas screen, and top with another piece of folded newspaper. When everyone has dipped a sheet or two of paper, put a board or other weights on the stack of wet papers. The next day, set out the papers until they are dry enough to peel off the new nature papers. You can also iron each one until it is dry. Use the paper for notes, as backing

Sage
Basil
Rosemary

for pictures, or use watercolors on them.

- Make wreaths to wear, and larger wreaths to dry for gifts, using any flexible vines (weeds are great; but be sure it's not poison ivy!). Make the base by fastening the vine in a circle of the desired size. Help children take lengths of vines and twist them in and out, around and around, until the wreath is as thick as you like. Tiny flowers can be added. Six inch wreaths are also great crowns for dancing, or for becoming royalty.
- Press tiny flowers and leaves in between the pages of an old telephone directory. For best results, press immediately after picking, and let dry in the directory for a few weeks. Most of our flowers and leaves were roadside weeds picked along our fence. We also carefully picked violets and pansies we'd planted earlier. We used the flowers to decorate notepaper and to make a collage by gluing pictures on small paper plates.
- Take as many photos of your garden and garden activities as possible. (Encourage children to draw pictures also.) Make a large scrapbook.

FUN WITH HERBS

Herbs are valuable additions to "smelling gardens." It is easier to grow them from greenhouse plants than seeds. Lavender, Rosemary, Sage, and Basil are common herbs. They can be grown in cans on windowsills, in large containers outside, or small pots. Try a small old-fashioned knot garden, separating tiny sections with a hedge of parsley. Dry leaves, crumble, and store in film cans or tiny plastic jars. Use for games to match smells, or just to compare and enjoy the scents. Dry the herbs upside down in a dry place; then pick some leaves to fill a bowl with herb potpourri, or weave some into the wreaths you make.

- Make hanging planters by glueing six flat popsicle sticks into a triangle. Staple three heavy paper cups together, and fit them snugly into the triangle. Use three pieces of colorful yarn, one tied to each corner, and hang in a sunny window.
- If you have grown herbs, make tiny sachets for gifts. A six-inch (saucer-sized) circle of a lightweight fabric, such as calico or cotton gauze, is just about the right size for a tablespoon of flower petals and herb leaves. Help children pull the edges together and tie with a ribbon or length of yarn.
- Herbs can also be used to make sweets. Help children pick mint leaves or violet blossoms. Rinse them and let them dry on paper toweling. Boil a mixture of one cup of sugar and one-half cup water together until it spins a thread. Cool the mixture (safely away from children). When the syrup has cooled, help children dip the leaves or blossoms into the egg white, shake off the excess, and put on waxed paper. Then sprinkle with sugar, and let them dry. Try a few for garnishes at snack-time.
- Try making some liquid soap with herbs. Mix a bottle of baby shampoo with one tablespoon of olive oil and a few teaspoons of herbs you've grown. Ginger, lemon verbena or mint, rosemary, and thyme are good to use. Let the mixture stand in a cool dark place for a week or two. You can use the soap for hands or even as shampoo!

BOOKS TO READ:

- *My First Garden Book* by Angela Wilkes (Alfred Knopf)
- *Look, Mom, It's Growing* by Ed Fink (A.B. Morse Co.)
- *Growing Up Green* by Alice Skelsey & Gloria Huckaby (Workman)
- *Linnea's Windowsill Garden* by Lena Anderson (R & S Books)
- *The Crafter's Garden*, by Joni Prittie (Meredith Press).
- *The Amazing Dirt Book* by Paulette Bourglois (Addison-Wesley)

NATURAL QUESTIONS

by Mary Beth Spann Minucci

Donald M. Silver is author of two must-have series of Scientific American Books for Young Readers (W.H. Freeman and Co.). His first series, One Small Square, *is aimed at elementary school-age children. His most recent series,* One VERY Small Square, *is a collection of interactive nature pop-up books for younger children.*

As a scientist-turned-children's author, Donald M. Silver's enthusiasm for and understanding of children and nature is clearly reflected in his work. His books are filled with fascinating facts and invitations for youngsters to explore. Silver believes that, even if your own science knowledge is shaky, you can still use everyday encounters and conversations like those that follow to insure children will come to know nature as an endless source of wonder. Here are some of Silver's golden nuggets of nature wisdom.

- **Be alert to children's questions.** *"Why?"* is a basic science question. When children begin asking *"Why?"*, go outside to discover answers together.
- Even if you don't think of yourself as a nature nut, **try to have fun with children outdoors.** You may be reminded of the fun you had when you were a child.
- **Teach children that nature is to be both enjoyed and respected.** This can be tricky since we want children, for example, to smell the fragrant flowers, but not to touch the poison ivy. It's up to you to learn about what's growing and living in your locale. Then, with your guidance, children can learn that they needn't fear nature. They can learn, too, that an animal who stings or a plant that has prickers are not "mean," but instead are just trying to survive.
- **Relate what you see to children's lives.** Observations such as, *"Look! That squirrel is nibbling a nut. You like snacks too!"* can help children recognize things they have in common with the wildlife they're observing.
- Whenever possible, **give a name for a specific plant or animal** and relate it to what the child already knows, such as colors or shapes. For example, you might say, *"See that bird over there? That's a cardinal. The color of its feathers matches the color of your red jacket."* Afterwards, resist the urge to drill children on the specific species you labeled. Remember this is not Zoology .
- **Avoid giving human traits to your observations of animal behavior.** For example, instead of saying, *"That raccoon is looking at you because he is wondering why you won't button your jacket,"* say something more realistic such as, *"That raccoon is watching you. He doesn't know if you mean danger. That's a good thing because by being careful and not coming close he is protecting himself."*
- **Become familiar with the guidelines of the areas you visit.** For example, if a nature preserve asks you not to take away plant or rock samples, then impress on children the reasons for letting things be. As a rule, discourage children from taking nature souvenirs that are still growing such as tree bark or wildflowers. Be sure children understand that trees and other plants are living things.
- Always offer lots of sensory "I wonder" questions such as, *"I wonder why this leaf is shaped this way?"* Invite lots of guesses, then see if you can find out the answer. Be sure to tell children that some questions have no answers, so maybe they will be the ones to discover new truths!
- **Look for opportunities to follow up on your observations.** If, for example, in the pages of a picture book you spot the same flower you saw in your garden that morning, make the connection for children.

STONE SWEET HOME

by Connie F. Venier

Children appear to be fascinated with insects and discovering new things. In this outdoor activity, not only will they find insects, but they will uncover what these tiny creatures call home.

You will need a hand shovel and a magnifying glass. To begin, find a large stone slightly imbedded into the ground. If stones are not available, logs and even small lawn statuettes can accommodate insects.

With the hand shovel, pry one end of the stone up and roll the stone over on its side. Here you should find one or several insects living below in their humble dwellings.

By using the magnifying glass, children can get a closer look without disturbing the insects. Give each child a turn to view the insects through the magnifying glass.

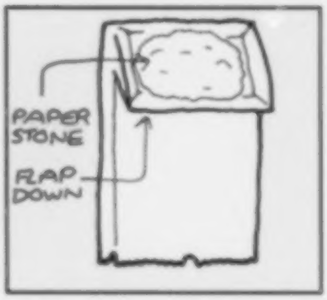
Some of the insects children may uncover will be familiar to them such as ants and crickets. Others will be less common, like the sticky slug and the shy roly poly.

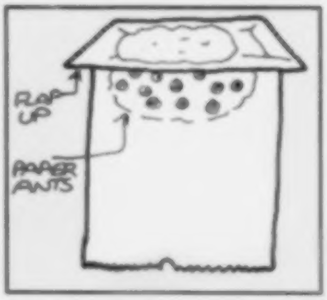
During the outdoor activity, ask questions; for example, *"Did the insect choose his home for himself or for his family?"* (Noticing one or several more insects nesting beneath the stone.) *"Why do you think the insect lives under the stone?" "Why do we need a home to live in?"*

After children have finished observing the insects in their environment, return the stone back into the ground.

Let children do a craft relating to their outdoor experience. This can be done either outside on a picnic table or indoors.

WHAT'S UNDER THE ROCK?





You'll Need: a brown paper lunch bag ▲ yellow and black construction paper ▲ safety scissors ▲ glue ▲ sand ▲ a paper punch ▲ an assortment of crayons.

What to Do:

1. Let each child draw a shape that resembles a stone on yellow construction paper.
2. Let the child cut out her shape. With crayons, let children color and decorate their shape to look like a stone.
3. Then have children glue the stone shape onto the flap of a folded paper bag.
4. Lifting the flap up, let each child squeeze out enough glue to cover the area under the fold, but DO NOT put fold down into glue. Leave it open.
5. With the paper punch, let each child punch out holes from black construction paper and place them on the glue. (This is to resemble ants.) Children may wish to add other insects or worms with crayons or construction paper.
6. Next, let the child sprinkle a handful of sand over the glue and ants. (This is to suggest soil.) Tip the bag on its side to remove any leftover sand.

IN THE BOOK CORNER

JUST OUTSIDE YOUR DOOR...

by Sandra L. Malcolm

Open your door. Step outside. You enter a classroom as vast as the eye can see—and beyond. While outside, don't forget to take your picture books. Four possibilities, out of an endless number of children's books appropriate to this theme, are the focus of this BOOK CORNER. The books were chosen for their child appeal, presentation of factual information, and concern for the environment.

WATCH WHERE YOU GO

by Sandy Noll (Penguin) is about a dragonfly who follows a little mouse through the jungle on his way home to his family. His journey takes him over, under, and around many interesting things.

BEFORE READING, ask children: *"If you were walking home from school, what would you see along the way?" "Are some things dangerous to walk near? What?"*

AFTER READING, ask questions such as: *"Did the mouse make it home safely?" "How do you know?" "What dangers did he meet along the way?" "What could have happened to him?" "Did the dragonfly help him?" "In what ways?"* Read only the dragonfly sentences to children. *"What do you notice when we read the dragonfly's words?"*

ACTIVITIES

◆ Have children paint or draw pictures of other animals Mouse might have met along the way. When the pictures are dry, paste a small gray mouse and a dragonfly on each one. Have children use black marker to indicate Dragonfly flying.

◆ Ask: *"What if Mouse lived on a farm (or city) instead of the jungle? What dangers would he encounter there?"* Make your own class big book about one of these new places.

◆ Make mouse sock puppets. As you say a directional word, have children move their puppets.

ANT CITIES

by Arthur Dorros (Harper and Row) explains how ants live and work together. There are interesting facts about several varieties of ants.

BEFORE READING, bring in a piece of food that has ants on it. Set the container in the center of the group and allow time for children to observe the activities of the ants. Discuss what the ants are doing. Ask children what they know about ants; what they want to learn about ants. Write their responses on a chart.

AFTER READING, look at the chart you made. Add a column for what you learned about ants. Ask children: *"Why do we think of cities when we talk about ants?" "What jobs do ants do?" "How do you think they know what jobs to do?" "Why do the queen and males have wings while the workers do not?"*

ACTIVITIES

◆ Obtain a large piece of packing foam. Carve it into the shape of an ant hill. Carve tunnels and rooms to look like the cross-section in the book. Make tiny ants (cut-up straws should work) that children can move about the ant city.

◆ Create a real ant city following the directions on the last page of the book.

◆ Assign (or allow choice of jobs) children to act out the jobs of the ants. Make construction paper "antennae" for children to wear on their heads.

◆ Go outside on an ant hunt. Look for places around your school where ants live. Remind children that they are not to kill the ants.

LONG LIVE EARTH

by Meighan Morrison Ashton (Scholastic) introduces children to the environmental problems of our planet as well as solutions in which they can participate. The rhyming text and quilt-like illustrations are delightful.

BEFORE AND AFTER READING, show a globe to children. Ask if they know what it is. Give some background information about long ago when no one lived on the earth. Our story talks about Earth long ago and what has happened to it. Read the first three pages, then stop to discuss each. Read the next pages that address the dangers to Earth. Discuss meaning and allow time for children to respond with their thoughts. Finish reading and discussing how we can all join together to save Earth.

ACTIVITIES

◆ Make a class list of suggestions to save Earth. Have children each choose their favorite to make a picture. Make a bulletin board of the ideas and illustrations.

◆ Contact the local newspaper to photograph the bulletin board and/or interview children about caring for Earth.

◆ Plan a walk to clean up the school grounds. Provide plastic gloves and discuss safety before undertaking this project.

◆ Make litter bags for the family car. Encourage children to be aware of throwing trash on the ground. Have them discuss this with their families.

◆ Recycle everything you can in your classroom. Use both sides of paper for pictures and create a scrap box for leftover paper.

◆ Take a field trip to a recycling center.

◆ With the help of older students or volunteers, write letters to the President expressing your concerns about Earth. Illustrate the letters.

IN THE SMALL, SMALL POND

by Denise Fleming (Henry Holt) explores the many activities that take place in a pond using simple, vivid text.

BEFORE READING, open the book out flat to show both the front and the back cover. Ask questions such as: *"What is happening in this picture?" "Where do you think the story is going to take place?" "This story won an award (Caldecott) for its pictures. Let's look closely at the pictures as we read the story."* (Point out the Caldecott symbol on the cover of the book.)

AFTER READING, ask children why they think the pictures won an award. What funny-sounding words did they hear in the story? (*wriggle, quiver, splitter, swoop, etc.*) Do these words help us know how the animals move? How? What are *whirligigs*? Has anyone ever seen one? Have children name all the different animals that live in or use the pond. Do they all get along living together? Why or why not?

ACTIVITIES

◆ List all the action words used in the story. Have children act out each activity as you read it from the list. (Example: *shiver*) Talk about each word.

◆ Have children create a classroom award for books they make. Make a symbol for the award to put on the cover of class-created books.

◆ Encourage easel painting of pond scenes.

◆ Make a flannelboard pond and animals for children to use to tell their own stories about pond life. Expand this to forest life, jungle life, farm life, etc.

◆ Visit a small pond in your area. Look for a variety of wildlife. Make a list of everything you see. (Are there any whirligigs?) Take photographs while you are there.

◆ Using the photographs taken on the pond field trip, write a class story about the pond.

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STILL IN THE BOOK CORNER

THE PATTERNS OF SUMMER

by Karel Kilimnik

Life is made up of patterns. Go outside and what do you see? A multitude of patterns. These books provide a springboard for looking more closely at plants, insects, animals and outdoor events.

- *Look Once Look Twice* by Janet Marshall (Ticknor & Fields) is a good starting point. It is an alphabet book composed of patterns from living things. You must follow the title *Look Once Look Twice* to figure out what living thing is seen in each letter. This little book helps focus attention on patterns (from asparagus to zebra).
- Jack, an enterprising lad, creates a garden in *Jack's Garden* by Henry Cole (Greenwillow). This delightful and highly informative book has its own pattern similar to the story of "Jack and the House that Jack built." We start with *"This is the garden that Jack planted,"* and go to *"This is the soil that made up the garden that Jack planted."* Each page is framed with pictures pertaining to that part of the story. The author shares his knowledge of seeds, insects, birds, and flowers. Look for patterns in the seeds, clouds, seedlings, flowers, and other living things. A note at the end gives more information on how to plant a garden.
- In *Sunflowers* by Miela Ford (Greenwillow), a young girl lovingly plants a sunflower seed with its dark stripes. The girl carefully nurtures her sunflower seedling into a huge stately plant. This book with its plain language and bright pictures would capture even a toddler's attention.
- Amy Jonas blends whimsy with math concepts in *Splash* (Greenwillow). A little girl with a pond in her backyard watches as the one turtle, two catfish, three frogs, four goldfish, one dog, and a cat take turns splashing in and out of the pond. Check out patterns in their movements, skin coverings as well as things on the bottom of the pond.
- *One Sun Rises, an African Wildlife Counting Book* by Wendy Hartmann (Dutton) takes us to another continent for more counting and outdoor creatures. Watching as one brilliant yellow sun rises over Africa, we see "Two kestrels hover in the sky" on up to "ten reed frogs praise the moon" and then begin to count back down through the night until "one sun rises over Africa" again.
- *The Sierra Club Wildlife Library Snakes* by Eric S. Grace (Sierra Club Books for Children) does a thorough job of providing answers for often-asked questions about snakes. The text is well organized and provides good pictures. Snakes are a wealth of patterns from their behavior to their scaly skin.
- Shulamith Levey Oppenheim creates a warm family story in *Fireflies for Nathan* (Tambourine Books). Nathan visits his Nana and Poppy and becomes part of his family's pattern when he asks, *"What was Daddy's favorite thing to do when he was six?"* and finds out it was catching fireflies *"just when the fireflies began to star the grass."* Patterns are evident both in family traditions and the outside world of fireflies.

This book gives children an opportunity to find out what their parents and grandparents liked to do at their age and explore family traditions.

- Patterns overflow in *Saturday Market* by Patricia Grossman (Lothrop, Lee, Shepard). A visit to an outdoor market in Mexico teems with patterns in the sacks of chile peppers, calla lillies tied in bunches, a brightly feathered rooster that does not crow, just baked bread and cookies, and colorful woven scarves.

Maybe there's a farmers' market or outdoor vendors in your neighborhood to visit and observe patterns. Sketch, photograph, dictate stories, and then share them with other classes and maybe even the community newspaper.

PICNIC FARE

by Paula Gaj Sitarz

Stories seem to become even more special when you read them to children outdoors. Share books about picnics and then have your own picnic.

In *The Picnic* (Dutton), Ruth Brown combines a tale and illustrations from the animals' point of view. When humans approach a field where Rabbit and his friends live, the animals scurry underground. All ends happily when it begins to rain, and the people and dogs leave. Then the sun comes out and the animals picnic on the leftovers from the humans' picnic.

Five Little Monkeys Sitting in a Tree by Eileen Christelow (Clarion Books) get into trouble when they go with their mother to the riverbank for a picnic supper. The monkeys climb a tree and start to tease Mr. Crocodile. Each time Mr. Crocodile snaps there is one less monkey until there are none. Where are they? (Each in turn has hidden in the leaves of the tree.)

Children will meet a delightful aardvark in *Aardvark's Picnic* by Jon Atlas Hingham (Little, Brown). Aardvark is upset because he's supposed to provide ants for the picnic with his friends and he can't find them. Along the way to the picnic site, he asks other animals if they have any ants. They don't, but he invites them along and they bring the food they like. When aardvark meets his friends, he begins to tell them about the missing ants, but they spy the ants in his basket where they've been all along.

In *The Pig's Picnic* by Keiko Kaska (G.P. Putnam's Sons) Mr. Pig is on his way to Miss Pig's house to invite her on a picnic. Along the way Fox, Lion, and Zebra each give Mr. Pig something from their body to make him look more "handsome." When Miss Pig answers the knock on her door, she is shocked. Mr. Pig runs away, returns the parts on loan, and goes back to Miss Pig as himself.

Holly Keller has written a short, sweet story about Henry and his excitement about the Fourth of July picnic in *Henry's Fourth of July* (Greenwillow). Henry delights in the wonderful activities before and after the picnic and he savors the picnic food from watermelon to corn on the cob and cookies.

Nadine Bernard Wescott has created playful, whimsical illustrations to accompany the song *A Real Nice Clambake*, lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II and music by Richard Rogers (little Brown). Join a family and their friends on a New England beach and savor the wonderful foods at a clambake—from codfish chowder to clams steamed under rockweed.

Jane Yolen has written a humorous mystery in *Picnic with Piggins* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich). The Reynard household is busy with preparations for a picnic that includes a surprise for Piggins, the family butler. Accompanied by friends the Reynard family drives to a lovely picnic spot. They play games, eat the delicious foods, tell stories and then most of the party fall asleep. A crash and a splash awaken them. Piggins learns that Rexy, one of the Reynard children, is missing. There are clues and everyone declares Rexy's disappearance a mystery but Piggins says it's a hoax. What is really going on?

PICNIC ITEMS FEELIES BOX

Do ahead: Get a picnic basket (or a box will do) and place the following items inside—napkins, paper cup, paper plate, small bag of chips, apple, sealed pack of cookies, wrapped sandwich and a plastic spoon. Think of other picnic items that are safe to touch and include them.

During the activity: Invite each child in turn to place a hand in the box or basket and to feel the objects inside without looking. Then ask what she thinks it contains. When everyone is through guessing, show the items to children.

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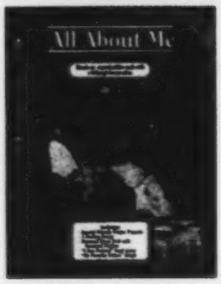
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Ciao

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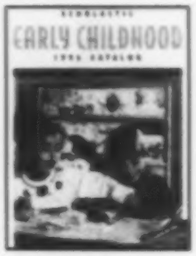

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Vol. 16 No. 5

For People Who Care for Young Children

September/October 1995

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CONTENTS

FEATURES:

Before the First Day.......... 6
Tips for Parents: Great Beginnings.......... 7
Start with a Teddy Bear.......... 10
The Sky's the Limit.......... 12
Start with a Photo.......... 13
Creative Calendars.......... 14
A Lively Bulletin Board.......... 15
Routines and Independence.......... 16
Clean-Up Tips.......... 18
Setting the Stage.......... 23
More than One Way to Learn.......... 24
Begin with Critical Thinking.......... 26
A Life-Long Journey.......... 28
Start with Science.......... 30

DEPARTMENTS:

HELPFUL HINTS: Start the Year Off Right.......... 5
TODDLER TIME: A Positive Place.......... 8
LEARNING WITH BOXES: Begin with a Box.......... 19
IN THE BOOK CORNER:
    Begin with a Book.......... 32
    Begin with ABC.......... 33
    Something New Everyday.......... 34

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

by Lisa Lyons Durkin

For children, or anyone who has ever been to school, September is a time of beginnings. Summer is over and it's time for new places, experiences, and friends. For many of your children it may be the first time they have been in a structured program. It is a time that is both exciting and scary.

This whole issue of *First Teacher* has been written to make this new beginning a positive one, both for you and the children you care for. Starting with a checklist of things you can do **before** the first day and tips for parents on what to do **on** that first day, all the articles are full of helpful ideas and activities.

Jeannine Perez helps you plan a Toddler room filled with exciting new discoveries to make AND spaces, activities, and routines that give very young children a feeling of safety and security. A first day bulletin board activity about hot air balloons and a week-long unit on teddy bears also offer ideas for making children feel at home right away in your classroom.

It's important to introduce routines at the beginning to help children develop independence throughout the year. Karen Stephens' article will help you plan your basic schedule integrating important routines. Barbara Backer's tips on taking the chaos out of cleanup will help your program run more smoothly and teach preschoolers responsibility at the same time.

As you plan for the year, think about the idea that there is "more than one way to learn." You'll find out how to plan for different learning styles in the article by Sally Bing. Sherry Burrell shows you how to teach critical thinking skills in all areas of the curriculum. She uses the popular fall theme of apples for her examples.

Science is often shortchanged in early childhood programs, according to Ellen Javernick. She outlines an exciting Science Symposium for preschool and Kindergarten children that can set the tone for a year full of scientific fun.

First Teacher always gives you projects you can make from throwaway objects. In this issue we invite you to "begin with a box." Boxes of all shapes and sizes can be made into games, props, math, science, and art projects, and cozy hideaways.

Calendars and bulletin boards, photos, and children's literature...This issue of *First Teacher* will show you how each of these and more contribute to great beginnings. Have a super year!

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

✎ Our new contributor, *Ava McVey*, teaches the elementary grades in Honolulu, Hawaii. She is no stranger to preschool, however. At the University of Hawaii, she did much of her practice teaching in pre-K and Kindergarten classrooms. She has been an assistant teacher for three and four year olds. Also she was a parent volunteer when her daughter, Megan, (now a fifth grader) was in preschool.

✎ *Dr. Sally Bing* is an Associate Professor at the University of Maryland, Eastern Shore where she teaches many courses including Educational Psychology. A longtime First Teacher contributor, she also consults with major educational publishers on textbooks. At the present time, she is involved in developing an exciting new combination Early Childhood Education and Child and Family Studies program at her university. The two-pronged training program which stresses cultural diversity will feature a lab school on campus. The program will be available to students in the fall of 1996.

OOPS! The title of the July/August 1995 issue should have been "Outdoor Learning."

PHOTO CREDITS

Peter Lewin: cover, 11, 13, 15, 23, 27

ART CREDITS

Debby Dixler: pages 10, 14, 18, 19-22

Nina Woldin: pages 5, 12, 34, 35

Janet McDonnell: pages 6, 28, 29

Catherine Minor: pages 9, 17, 24, 25, 30, 31

HELPFUL HINTS

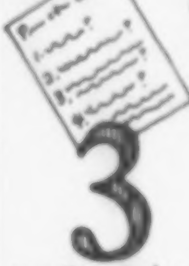
START THE YEAR OFF RIGHT!

by Gail P. Jones

Before school begins or shortly thereafter, send home a survey to make your year much easier. Ask for special talents, interests, cultural input, special days for parties, etc. You might include a list of supplies to save.

September
2

Sit down and plan the year's calendar. Put in all units, conference times, vacations, holidays, and tentative due dates for work to be done. List responsibilities for each staff member at the top of each month.



Laminate a Special-Person-of-the-Week booklet or poster with questions to be answered at home and returned with pictures for display. Use a dry erase marker for ease in changing each week. This can also be used for "Me" books.

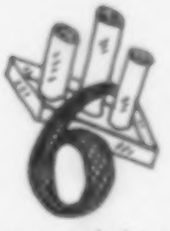
Plan for those toothbrushes, markers, lunch boxes, etc.

◆ By using contact paper-covered six-pack cartons, each child gets his own labeled space for toothpaste and brush.

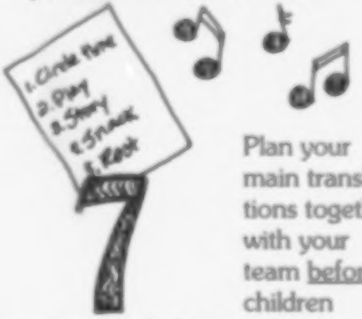
◆ Try putting the markers upside down in plaster of Paris in large margarine tubs. The lids stay in the plaster. Make one for each table.

◆ Storing lunch boxes in large baskets or crates on the floor prevents them from falling on heads at lunchtime!

Limit the number of children in a center with visible pockets and ID cards. Each child has an ID card. Each center has a different-colored piece of construction paper laminated and folded into the number of pockets that permits that number of children at that center. (Example: four pockets at the block center, two at the music center.) Children may change from center to center whenever there is an empty pocket space by putting their ID in that pocket.



By covering assorted sizes of tubes with different-colored construction paper and gluing one end of each to a box lid, you have terrific little storage bins for pencils, rulers, or scissors.



Plan your main transitions together with your team before children arrive. Include special songs, signals, etc. so that there is lots of consistency.

Plan attention getters. Put little finger puppets in a pocket. Do mime with white gloves to get a message to children. Have a little surprise box with a special word or object in it to introduce a concept.

BEFORE THE FIRST DAY...

by Mary Beth Spann Minucci

The beginning of a new school year brings brand new experiences with brand new children. Here's a checklist of things you can do in those last days before the opening of school to set up an inspiring classroom environment.

☐ **Take stock of what you've got**. Schedule a block of time to take a relaxed look in and around your room. Assess the furniture to discover what's moveable, what's stationary, what you'd like to stash in storage, and what you need to order or uncover from storage. Use paper to sketch out a few possible room arrangements. Carve out space for learning centers and remember to plan spaces for the whole group to gather, as well as spots for small group and one-on-one learning.

☐ **Enlist help with housecleaning.** Some teachers grab their children or spouses to help with the sprucing-up efforts. Others find it helpful to team up with a colleague (*"I'll clean your room if you clean mine."*) And still others pack tasty lunches and bring in music, books on tape, or portable TV's to make the job seem more enjoyable.

☐ **Plan and set up learning centers.** If you're a novice at using learning centers, start with a few basic centers and expand from there. Plan on including one or two thematic centers you will replace periodically as the year progresses, plus other core centers (such as the housekeeping center or the block corner) designed to stay in place all year long. Freshen your core centers from time to time with different manipulatives and props.

Science Center

☐ **Display your talents.** The best bulletin boards and displays are interactive with children adding artwork and details right to the board. This means you don't have to design four or five complete boards before the first day of school. Instead, cover all of your boards with colorful construction paper and finish off one or two with must-have displays such as a calendar. Your children will enjoy helping decorate the others.

☐ **Visit the library and collect an armload of books for starting off the year.** Also, collect books and music on tape for your listening center as well as movies on video for those rainy days.

☐ **Treat yourself to some new things for you or your classroom.** Visit teacher resource stores, book stores, garage sales, or dime stores. Just the right out-of-pocket purchase can give you a lift that lasts all year long.

☐ **Make important connections.** Take time to send out separate welcoming letters to your new families. If you publish a class newsletter, plan the first copy as an introduction to events and happenings you anticipate in the year ahead, and include a copy in each mailing. Invite children to bring something special— a photograph, favorite toy or book—to share with the class on that first day.

☐ **Pamper yourself.** Save a day or two before opening day to take a breather from school and do something special for yourself. Go to a movie, take a long walk, visit with friends or family, or relax with a book. And remember that ahead lies a wonderful adventure.

TIPS FOR PARENTS

by Margery A. Kranyik

Many families have anxieties about children starting school. Help them to adjust by providing helpful hints for successful transitions and communication between themselves and their children. Distribute or post the following ideas at orientation or when a new child arrives in your class.

GREAT BEGINNINGS

Your child's first day of school—preschool or kindergarten—should be a time of family celebration. Celebrate together—new friends, new responsibilities, and new experiences in learning and play.

To help your child understand and enjoy this major event, plan on spending extra time together before and immediately after the first day of school. Support the excitement and talk about your child's concerns. (At some point, everyone has had a "first day of school.")

▶ When you visit the school, take time to explore the outside of the building, the play area, and the neighborhood. Address your child's concerns and fears. Are there questions to answer?

▶ Have something special for supper the first night of school—a favorite meal or dessert.

▶ A new pal at school may become someone for visits at home after school or on weekends. But if your child does not talk much about other children, don't be surprised! Many young children think of school as the first time they have a life away from the family. They may choose not to share their school experiences. A visit or phone call to the teacher will help families identify new playmates. Try to arrange an outing to a playground, restaurant, amusement park, or museum for you, your child, and a playmate. Often your child will begin to have fun with new friends more easily in a place away from home.

▶ Responsible behavior and decision-making skills that are developed and fine-tuned at school should be continued at home. Allow your child to make fun decisions while choosing snacks, clothes to wear, or family activities. Your job is to encourage responsible behavior such as picking up toys and materials and helping around the home.

▶ Take some time in the evening for activities together. Read a story, listen to a tape, play a game, construct with blocks or other construction materials, or just take a short walk around your neighborhood. Ask your child thought-provoking questions, *"What do you think will happen next?" "What is happening here?" "How would you feel if...?"*

▶ Make sure your child has a private space where he can go to be alone—to read or play or think. This area should NOT be for punishment, just a place for quiet time. A corner with a large pillow and favorite stuffed animal could be that cozy nook.

▶ At all times, regardless of your child's age, keep open lines of communication between home and school. If time allows, volunteer in the school or the classroom or help with cutting and pasting projects at home. Attend special events at school. This will help when talking to your son or daughter about school life. If there is a family crisis, although it may be difficult, tell your child's teacher. Problems at home often affect a child's behavior at school. Being open can help your child cope with a difficult situation.

Families are children's first teachers! You play a vital role in your child's education. Enjoy your child's years in child care and school. Provide plenty of hugs and love! Celebrate the new beginning!

TODDLER TIME

A POSITIVE PLACE

by Jeannine Perez

Imagine for a moment that you are less than three feet tall, clutching your mother's hand and looking anxiously around a strange place with strange faces. Your mother says, *"This is your new school,"* and you hang on to her even more tightly because you're afraid that if she leaves, you may never see her again. Now slip back into your teacher role. Is it possible to find ways to make the transition from home to childcare a smooth and comfortable one?

You can balance the security of the familiar with exciting new experiences and learning areas. Children need excitement and security, stimulation and stability. The following ideas may be helpful as you plan a positive learning environment for the children in your class.

- Large open spaces tend to overwhelm children. Define specific learning centers and other areas with tape markings on the floor or eye-high dividers. Balance an open and airy feeling with the structure of divisions.
- Limit "busyness" in your room. One large wall display or poster is more visually appealing than many small pictures scattered. Look at your room with new eyes. Clear wall areas when artwork has been up so long that you no longer really see it, straighten shelves, and discard or renovate worn and broken toys.
- Organization of books and materials gives a sense of security to children and teachers. Spend a few hours each week organizing materials for the next week, and give basic and often-used materials their own space.
- Duplicates of some favorite toys help children who are just learning to share to do so with a minimum of frustration. Check garage sales and rummage sales for toy bargains.
- Change dramatic play areas often. For example, one week the area might be a grocery store with empty food cartons, a cash register, sacks, and play money. In a short time, it can become a library with table, books, and check out cards, and still later be transformed into a pet shop with stuffed animals.
- Set up a "sharing table" as a special place of honor to hold treasures children bring in to share—a rock, beautiful leaf, or feather. Be sure to change and rearrange items often so that the table does not become crowded. Perhaps more permanent items could then be displayed on narrow wall shelves.
- Limit the number of children in small areas such as reading or dress-up areas. (Make a sign with pictures showing the number of children that can play in that area at one time.)
- Balance hardness in your classroom (chairs, tables, etc.) with soft areas. Beanbag chairs, stuffed toys, a clay table, and rugs add soft spots.
- Establish a place to store unfinished projects, or a corner for art in progress, where children can choose to paint. Keep it out of high traffic areas.
- If you have small rooms, designate each one as a particular activity station. Be flexible, and change stations when needed.
- For a cozier room, lower the ceiling by draping fabric or a parachute, hanging plants, or even hanging umbrellas. Be careful to hang any materials securely and be sure fabric and paper are not located near light fixtures. (If uncertain, check with a fire marshal.)
- Provide a private, quiet space like a refrigerator box with soft cushions inside and just enough space for one or two children or one child and a teacher to read, talk, or just dream.
- Color code cot sheets. You can use many shades of gingham for cot sheets, and match the color of each to cubby name tags and placemats. The placemats can be made of laminated construction paper. Add outlines of flatware, circles for cup or glass and plate with

FINGERPAINT FIRST!

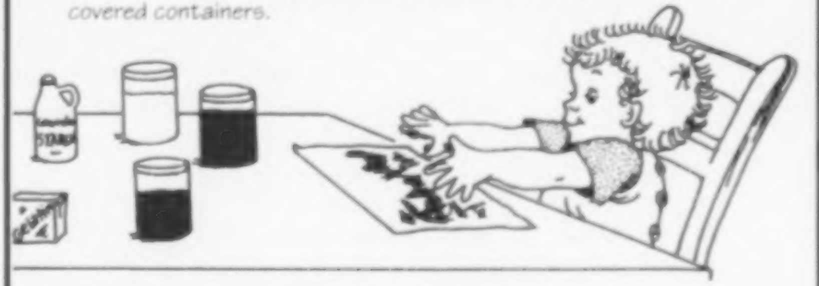
Fingerpaints are a wonderful first art activity. It is easy to make your own, and the soap in this recipe makes paint that is easily removed from clothes or floors.

You'll Need:

1 envelope gelatin mixed with 1/4 cup cold water ◆ 1/2 cup liquid laundry starch combined with 3/4 cup cold water ◆ 1/2 cup mild soap flaked or granules ◆ food coloring or liquid tempera paint

What to Do:

1. Add 2 cups hot water to starch and cook slowly (stirring with a wooden spoon) until the mixture comes to a full boil and is completely thickened.
2. Remove the hot mixture from the heat and blend in the softened gelatin.
3. Add soap and stir until completely dissolved.
4. Add food coloring or paint. (Add less than 1 Tablespoon of coloring or paint to each recipe.) Makes about 3 cups of paint. Store in covered containers.



permanent marker, so that children can easily help set the table. Milk spills less often! Children will soon learn their own color and everyone else's color too. It's a painless way to identify all the colors.

- If possible, add a rocking chair to your necessary equipment list. It is a comfort island for children and for teachers, too.
- Snap pictures of staff, room areas, and pets. Keep a file of the pictures. Include snapshots with your welcoming letter to each new child.
- Encourage children to bring in family pictures for their cubbies as a link to home.
- Clocks are an important part of any center routine. At first, talk about the time as "*before lunch*," "*after nap*." When basic routines become a part of each day, and terms like *before* and *after* are understood, include the clock in your conversations. *"It's almost 12 o'clock. Time to wash hands for lunch." "At five o'clock your parents will be here. Let's finish your picture to surprise them."*
- Bring plants and animals to your classroom encouraging children to develop a feeling of ownership and responsibility. Do so with thought and planning to be sure that any living things in your classrooms will have good homes, and also consider children who might have possible allergies or are fearful of animals. We began our year with fish and lots of plants, and progressed to the addition of a rabbit, a homemade greenhouse with seedlings inside the center, and a butterfly garden outside.
- Collect songs and fingerplays that can be used to smooth transition times, writing them on index cards and slipping several in a pocket each day. Some can be familiar favorites, while others are "piggy-back" songs that you make up with children and sing to familiar tunes.

Here is one to sing in autumn. It's a quieting song and fun to add action and movement to the words. (Tune: "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star")

See the leaves, float, down, down, down,
See the leaves, covering the ground.
SWOOSH....the wind is whirling by,
Leaves are dancing to the sky.
Now more leaves are floating down,
Floating down without a sound.

The easiest way to create an inviting room is to think of its occupants. You and your children spend many hours each week in the classroom. Make it a place of joy and beauty!

START WITH A TEDDY BEAR

by Susan Tersoff

The beginning of school can be difficult for young children—new faces, new places, and new routines. To help my three year olds feel more relaxed in their new surroundings, I schedule Teddy Bear Week soon after school starts. Children are reassured by having a family friend with them. At the same time, they practice skills in language arts, math, art, and science. Equally important, they have fun!

CIRCLE TIME

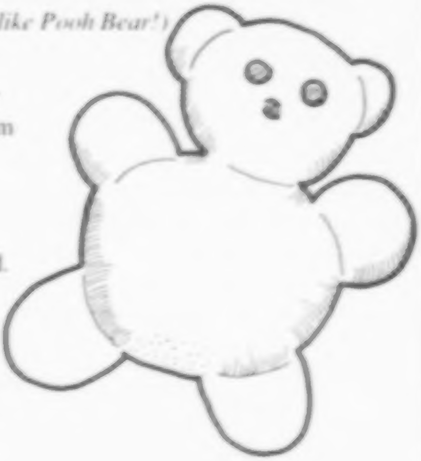
On Monday, everyone arrives with a teddy bear (or other stuffed animal). I always have some extras around for people to borrow. At circle time, I introduce my bear to each child and explain that he was a gift from my grandmother years ago. Then each child has a turn to introduce his bear and tell something special about it. The introductions help children to recall their classmates' names, as well as practice social skills. (In a large class, or one where children have short attention spans, more then one group time may be needed to give every child a turn.)

Other good activities for group time are "What's Missing?" and "Where's the Bear?" For the first, I line up several teddy bears and let children briefly describe them. After looking carefully, children close their eyes and I remove a bear. They open their eyes and describe which bear is missing. As children improve, more bears are put out and more than one are removed. For "Where's the Bear?" I hide one teddy bear in the room and give clues. Whoever finds it hides the bear and gives the next set of clues.

Action songs are also fun at group time, and many involve

BEAR BREAD

(Called that because we like to shape it to look like Pooh Bear!)



You'll Need: 3 cups blended (whole wheat and white) flour ◆ 1 Tblsp. Honey ◆ 1 tsp. salt ◆ 1 package dry yeast stirred into 1/4 cup of warm water ◆ 1 Tblsp shortening ◆ 1 cup milk, heated to scalding and cooled to lukewarm

What to Do:

1. Mix wet and dry ingredients, stirring until too thick to stir.
2. Put the dough (in 1 piece) in a large greased bowl, let it rise until double, punch down (THAT'S FUN!), then divide into balls for each child to knead.
3. Put the balls on a large greased cookie sheet in whatever shape you want. (Try a big bear.)
4. Let the dough rise again and bake in 375°F oven for about 45-55 minutes. If you want shiny BEAR BREAD, brush the bread with beaten egg yolk, and water before baking.

bears, including "The Teddy Bear Went Over the Mountain," "Fuzzy Wuzzy," and "Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear, Hop on One Foot."

LANGUAGE ARTS

Teddy Bear Week offers a variety of language arts activities. Along with the skills practiced in introducing bears to the class, children can work on asking appropriate questions as a follow-up. They also enjoy role-playing "Goldilocks and the Three Bears," and retelling it with a twist. (What would happen if...instead of...?) It is fun for children to arrange teddy bear stickers and dictate a story. And don't forget to give the bears a tour of the school along with your children. In addition to helping children feel more comfortable, it offers a fun way to review the experience. Children may remind their bears about people they met and rooms they visited by dictating notes to their bears. Or maybe some bears could dictate notes (with children's help)!

A popular activity in my class incorporates art and language arts. I read *Jesse Bear, What Will You Wear?* by Nancy White Carlstrom (Macmillan), and then give each child a cut-out teddy bear. Children dress the bear by gluing on pieces of paper or material. (Older children can cut out shirts, pants, etc.) Later we create our own version of "Jesse Bear," as children describe their bears following Carlstrom's model. They might glue these to craft sticks to make puppets and put on little shows.

MATH

Math is always fun with teddy bears. Children may group their bears by size, color, clothing, and other categories, and graph results. It is also fun to arrange bears from smallest to largest or line them up two-by-two. Teddy bear counters can be used, placed in egg cartons for practice in one-to-one correspondence, sorted by color, arranged in a circle, square, or other design, or used to create and copy patterns. At snack time, children like to count and sort teddy bear crackers before eating them.

SCIENCE

This is also a good opportunity to talk about real bears. *My Big Backyard*, *Ranger Rick*, and other nature magazines and books will help children recognize that there are many varieties of real bears and they have nothing in common with cuddly teddy bears toys.

BEARS EVERYWHERE!

I invite the bears to school to help children feel more comfortable, so I include them in almost all our classroom areas. For example, some children enjoy cooking dinner for the bears in the housekeeping area, while another group might build a house or cave for them with blocks. Children interact easily with the bears, even though they might be shy about interacting with their new classmates. And at naptime the bears are invaluable for calming children and easing them into sleep.

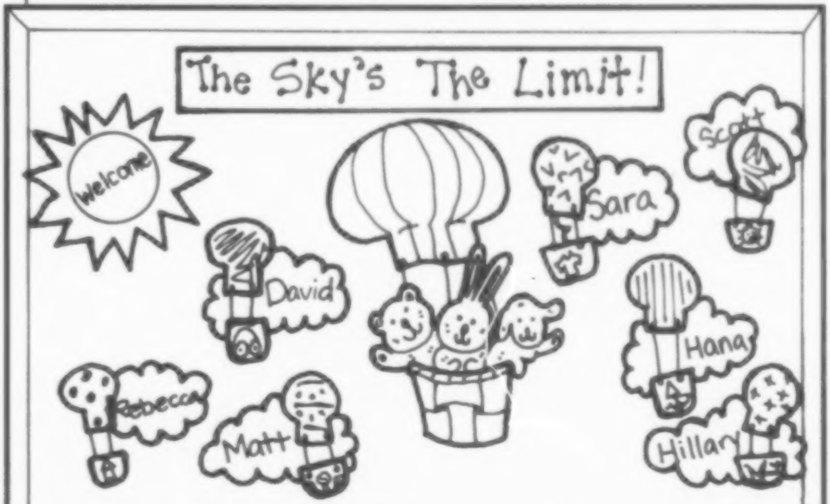
We end Teddy Bear Week with a grand finale—a teddy bear parade and picnic! We prepare for our picnic snack by shaking cream to make butter. Children spread the butter and honey on bread to make a sandwich any bear would love! Snack is followed by the book and cassette of *The Teddy Bears' Picnic* by Jimmy Kennedy (Green Tiger Press), and our teddy bear parade! It's a happy way to close this reassuring unit.

THE SKY'S THE LIMIT

by Ava Mulvey

Take time on the first day of school to start building a positive classroom atmosphere. The following activity helps children get over their first day "jitters" as they realize that everyone feels nervous in new situations. It also helps them get to know each other. It builds self-esteem because the children themselves help to decorate a back-to-school bulletin board. Before school starts, begin "The Sky's the Limit" bulletin board.

What You'll Need: a large paper hot air balloon with animals riding in the basket. (This can be made from colored bulletin board paper or bought at a teacher supply store.)
◆ light blue bulletin board paper
◆ a large sun with "WELCOME" printed on it
◆ one construction paper cloud for each child in the class. Print their names on the clouds.
◆ a book about the first day of school. Two suggestions: *The Berenstain Bears Go to School* by Stan and Jan Berenstain (Random House) and *First Day of School* by Helen Oxenbury (Penguin)
◆ small, hot air balloons. Draw a balloon and a basket on white paper or use a reproducible. Photocopy the number you need for your class. Cut out, and punch 2 holes in each balloon and 2 in each basket. Connect the basket and balloon using yarn.
◆ construction paper letters or a banner spelling out "The Sky's the Limit!"



What to Do:

1. Cover the board with light blue paper. Put a title at the top of the bulletin board. Then hang the large, hot-air balloon, the sun, and the clouds.
2. On the first day of school, read one of the stories suggested or your personal favorite. Talk with children about some of the feelings they experienced before coming to school that morning. Ask them how they feel now. Make the point that everyone feels nervous in a new situation. Remind children that school is a lot of fun and that they are going to have a great year.
3. Tell children that they are going to do an activity to help them get to know each other and become friends. Each child will receive a small, hot-air balloon to color. Then, on the basket, they will write or draw something about themselves that they'd like to share with the class. Show them a balloon you have done about yourself as an example. When everyone is finished, let children introduce themselves one at a time and share what they have written or drawn. Then, on the bulletin board, have each child find the cloud with her name on it and hang her balloon next to it. Children can look at one another's balloons and become better acquainted.

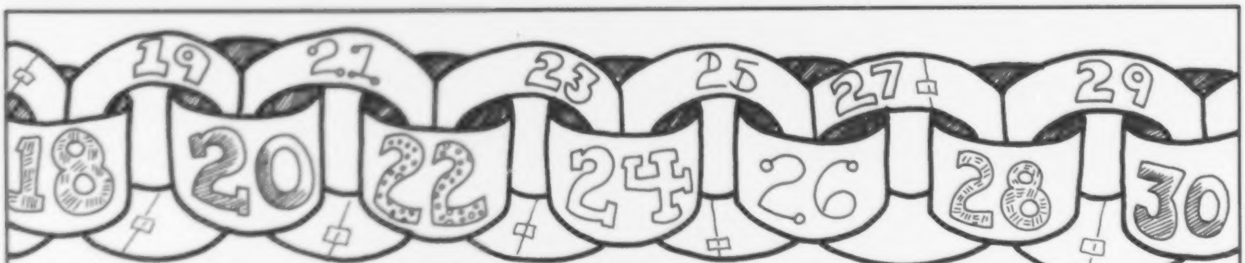
START WITH A PHOTO

by Gail P. Jones

Every year I've found new ways to use pictures of the children that make me wonder how I ever got along without them! Of course, you must get permission from parents to take pictures as some religions forbid it. If all is okay, take pictures of several children together as close up as you can. Try to keep the same distance so that all pictures are similar in size. If you have twenty children and take three together, you'll use seven shots for the individual faces of all. Use the rest of the first roll of film to take pictures of things in the room, school and routines to use in a "Get-to-Know-Your-School" book. Try to find a place that gives you free film or a free second set of pictures. Always save the original pictures of children's faces so that you can use them throughout the year. By color copying all the pictures on a large piece of paper, I can get great copies of all the children for under two dollars. (Ask if any parent can do it for you!) Here are some of the ways the cut-out pictures can be used.

- Make **class number posters** using stick figures and children's faces for each number.
- Use a photo of each child for ***cubbies, nap spots,*** and ***class folders.***
- Let each child make a **"Me" puppet on a stick** for use in the language arts area or for picking partners,or groups.
- Save a copy of each for the **center ID cards** (see page 5) which can be laminated or covered with contact paper after they're made.
- Make a **learning game** by putting a picture of each child on two matching sets of squares. Cut one set to match those on the board for a game. On the back of the board just names can be used so that children can match the pictures to the names when they are ready.
- The same cards can be used for a **spatial concept game** by putting the pictures around the room. (Example: Whose picture is *above* the refrigerator? Whose picture is *in* the markers?)
- Use photos for **recognition** such as "Look Who Knows Their Address!" or put them on murals with names of the children who produced it! (Parents who don't know all the children will appreciate it!)
- Use photos for **holiday ornaments and gifts** for parents, friends, and family.
- Keep the picture cards from the learning game in a special box to use when you need a *teacher's helper*.
- The most used "use" of the photos for me was in making **class books** to explain rules, routines, and expectations throughout the year. It was also a great self-esteem booster! Laminating the books or making them into baggie booklets will permit children to handle them frequently. Be sure to *include all* children in each book and *always* in a positive way!

(**P.S.** Take pictures of your room and bulletin boards for each unit...Put them in a file for next year so no great ideas are forgotten!)



CREATIVE CALENDARS

by Tania K. Cowling

Young children are starting to develop a sense of time and sequence, learning the days of the week, and practicing the order of numbers during the preschool years. Looking at the calendar each day is an activity that promotes this learning but it can become tedious week after week. Creating fun calendars can be educational and exciting. Think about your calendar as not only a way to mark time, but to collectively record daily events, experiences, and observations.

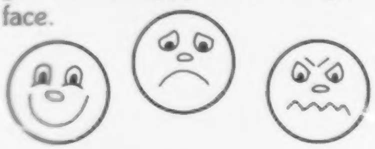
Here are a few ideas for making creative calendars with your children, either large grid ones for the class or smaller individual replicas.

CALENDAR STORIES

Start off with a large grid on a piece of chart paper. Number the days in the upper corner. Each day, pick one child to fill in a square on the calendar. Ask the child what is important about today or what she would like to do. With crayons and markers, let the child draw a special picture in the block. The child can then interact with the class telling a story about her picture.

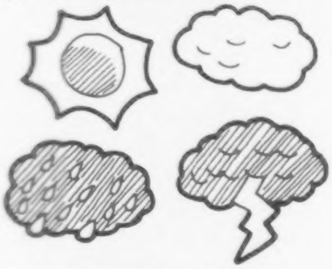
"FEELINGS" CALENDAR

Pick a month for discussing feelings—how it's normal to have good days and bad days. Select a child a day to fill in the grid with a happy, sad, or angry face.



WEATHER CALENDAR

Tracking the weather can help children become more aware of their immediate surroundings. Using the observation approach, check outdoors for the weather conditions and record these on your calendar. Draw pictures of the sun, clouds, rain, snow, lightning, etc. For older children, keep a thermometer handy to record and compare temperatures.



LOOP-CHAIN CALENDAR

Create an "advent type" calendar by making circular loops, one for each day of the month (28, 30, or 31). Number these and link them together. Each morning, pick one child to remove a loop. As the chain gets smaller, you're getting closer to the end of the month.

MUSICAL CALENDAR

Fill in each day with a traditional classroom song. Each morning, reveal the day's song and start the morning off with music.

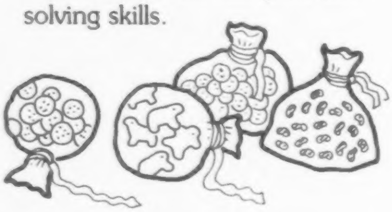
CALENDAR CALL (GAME)

Tape a calendar page to the floor. Using a small bean bag or jug lid, toss it across to the calendar. The child then recites the month, the day on which the marker lands, and the year. Give each child a turn at this game which is repetitive and reinforces skills.

"A TREAT A DAY"

Make and number a traditional calendar. You will need clear plastic baggies, one for each day. Fill the bag with small treats, one for each child, such as crackers, popcorn, raisins, etc. Each day, after discussing calendar facts, pull off the baggie and nibble a small treat together.

Creating calendars with your children can support their self-expression, as well as enhance their self-esteem and problem solving skills.



A LIVELY BULLETIN BOARD

by Barbara Fischer

A new school year is a new beginning for both children and teachers. Try something different this year by creating an everchanging theme board. This board visually displays the theme or learning center currently being presented. Concepts are fun to try too. Children delight in finding out what you have added or changed on the board each day.

Getting Started Take a standard bulletin board (37"x 25") or a portion of a larger board and add fadeless paper and a trim. Now you are ready to reinforce your curriculum, observation skills, pre-math, and pre-reading concepts.

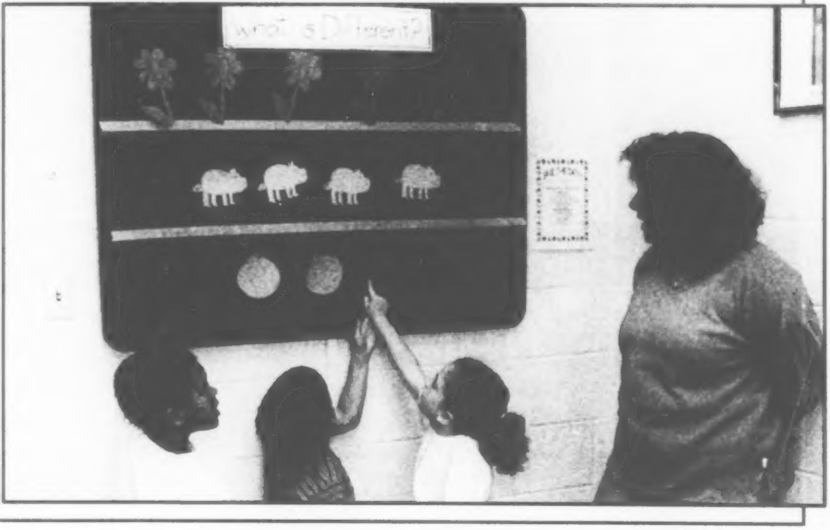
Set the Stage If you use a monthly theme, create a picture on the board representative of the main idea. If you and your children are exploring fun on the farm, a cut-out barn, farm animals, and several fruit trees would create your scene. The science center might portray night and day by using half black paper and half blue paper on the board. Stars, moon, an owl and some planets could fill the night sky; a sun, airplane, and a kite might be seen in the daytime sky.

Concepts are fun to represent, too. Top, middle, and bottom may be reinforced by dividing the board into thirds with tape. Staple animals or other objects in each section. Label the board "What is Different?"

What is Different? Each day before children arrive, take a few minutes to change, add, or remove some of the pieces. Children will be eager to see if they can discover "what is different" today. Ask a few leading questions and watch your children respond. Encourage them to count and name what they see. Parents, as well as children, have fun discovering the changes. The interest in this everchanging board can also ease the discomfort of a child who has difficulty separating from parents each morning.

Keeping the Board Everchanging Initial set up and daily changing will take a minimum amount of time out of your busy schedule. Inexpensive educational posters and magazine pictures provide a wealth of material to use for cutouts. As the background is not the featured part, a watercolor suggestion of hills, grass, and trees works well to set the scene. The cutouts are easily stored by category in envelopes for future use.

Your Partner in Teaching Let the theme board be a part of your teaching team. It is a way to help children become aware of their classroom environment and sharpen their observation and verbal skills. More importantly, this prop brings together another partnership: child, parent, and teacher.


what is Different?

ROUTINES AND INDEPENDENCE

by Karen Stephens

With each new beginning comes change. Even if change is for the better, change itself can be stressful for children as well as those who care for them. You can help children respond to change by helping them develop positive coping skills. Here are some strategies.

First develop a balanced daily schedule. This ensures that children are nurtured in all areas of development—social, emotional, physical, and intellectual. Large group activities, small group learning experiences, and individual play are specifically organized into the children's day.

The backbone of this schedule is routines that help pace the day for children. Identify the daily routines in your program. Help children and parents, become aware of these routines. By making sure your routines are predictable in time and type, you will be creating an environment where children feel safe and comfortable.

Following are some typical routines in early childhood programs. You will be able to see how they not only help children function within the group playing/learning environment, but also develop self help skills that lead to greater independence and self reliance.

MORNING ARRIVAL

A child's arrival to your program can set the tone for the entire day. So it makes sense to spend time making sure the transition from home to school is smooth and non-threatening. Before a child's first day in your program, it is a good idea to make parents aware of arrival procedures. Morning arrival may mean parents accompanying their child into the classroom, child sign-in, nurse health check, parent sharing a child's health information, or the like. Parents and children can be prepared for arrival routines by having a "warm up" visit before the child starts her first whole day alone in the program without the parent. Parents can be mailed information about morning routines. Parent orientation meetings can also include this type of information.

You can help children develop independence during morning arrival routines. Young children can learn to take off outdoor apparel (with a generous helping of teacher or parent assistance). Belongings can be put into cubbies. Treasures from home can be shown to and discussed with the teacher. Upon arrival it is good to give children some time to play in learning centers on their own before a group activity begins. The decision-making process of choosing learning centers builds independence and self-motivation.

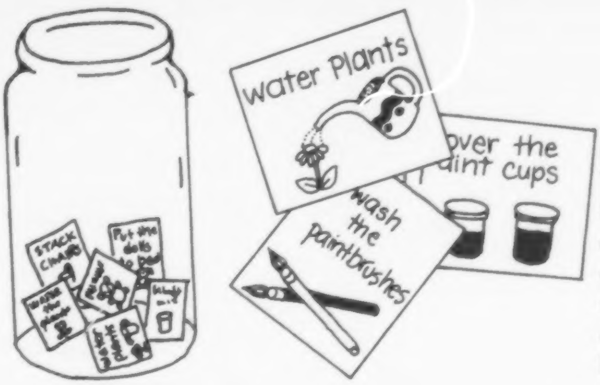
GROUP ACTIVITY

By 9 a.m. most preschool teachers gather children together for a large group experience. Through this daily activity children also develop independence. Children learn to control their behavior in a group of peers. They learn to listen and respond appropriately to teachers. They develop self-confidence to contribute to group discussions. Some teachers encourage children to vote on songs or stories to sing during large group time. This encourages independent thought as well as respect for other's ideas.

MEAL TIMES

Depending on the length of the program day, some children may eat breakfast, snacks and/or lunch at their early childhood center. Eating times can be organized so children have as many opportunities as possible for the development of independence and self-help. Children can help set tables for meals or snacks. Children may choose their lunch partners. (Some children benefit more from the structure of assigned seating.) When eating family style (bowls

Job Jar



Children pull slips of paper out of the job jar. The teacher then reads the slip to the child. Slips have any of the following classroom chores written on them: water the plants, clean the paintbrushes, cover the paint cups, stack chairs, straighten the dress-up clothes, put the dolls and stuffed animals to bed, etc.

of food are passed from one child to the another), children learn to behave responsibly by taking a small amount of each food offered. The ability to put food on the plate and pour milk leads to children's sense of independence because they get to eat "like the grown-ups." Cleanup of individual eating space encourages independence, responsibility, and cooperation. A positive self-image is encouraged as children learn how they can independently contribute to group functioning and well-being.

NAPTIME

After lunch, children can learn to be independent in caring for their bodies. Toilets should be used, hands washed, and teeth brushed—in THAT order! Depending on the lunch, faces may even need to be washed. Children can be involved in preparing themselves for naptime. Cots, blankets, and a favorite sleep item (dolls, bears, books) can be retrieved from storage basket or cubbie. Once a week, cot sheets need to be washed. When sheets (with elastic wrap-around leg straps) are easily removed, children can develop motor skills as well as skills that lead to greater and greater independence.

LEARNING CENTER PLAY

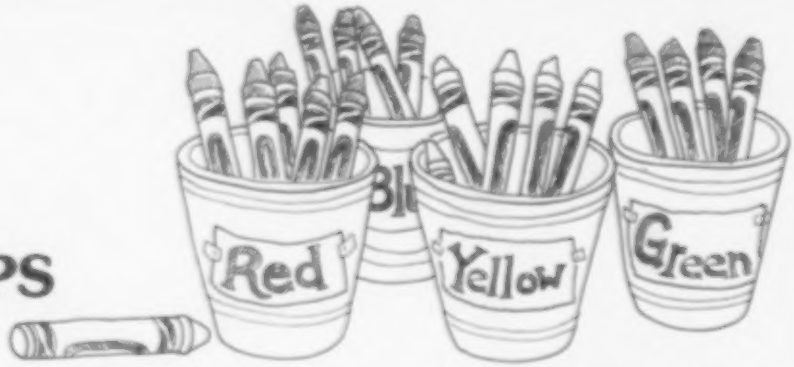
Each day children should be allowed to have some individual choices about where they play and what they play...not to mention with whom. Independence is the result of learning to make these decisions. Some teachers use "choice time" as a transition for helping children move from group activities to small group or individual play in learning centers. Posters or bulletin boards with each learning center pictured allow children to point to or hang a name tag on the learning center of their choice. They can then direct their own learning and play according to their individual needs and interests. Choice time and independent play in learning centers is an integral part of respecting children as individuals and trusting them to instinctively move to those areas that are most important to their current developmental and educational needs.

When a child first enters your program, or at the start of each year, it is a good idea to help children adjust to the classroom learning center environment by taking "group tours." Some teachers give children a tour of one learning center a day. During the tour the variety of play toys is pointed out and types of play that are appropriate for the area are talked about. For instance, in the family living area you may ask children, *"What kinds of things do you think you could pretend to do in here?"*

During the tour you may also help children think of rules for behavior. When children are part of the "rule making" process, they are much more likely to understand expectations for behavior and adjust to the necessary limits. Of course, they also develop independent logical thinking skills.

GOING HOME

To develop a sense of group unity at the end of the day a departure activity is a valuable scheduling technique. The end-of-the-day activity can involve singing songs or listening to a story. It should also include a group effort to clean up the room for the next day. Some teachers use a "job jar" or "job hat" or "helper chart" to help children organize their end of the day clean-up efforts. By helping children organize for the next day, you are teaching time management skills, predictive thinking, and independence.



CLEAN-UP TIPS

by Barbara F. Backer

Clean-up time can be a nightmare of overstimulated children and general confusion. Sometimes it seems to drag on forever with frustrated children's tears adding to the chaos. It leaves us thinking it'd be easier if we cleaned up ourselves.

But, we're here to help children learn, and tidying your mess is an important life skill.

How we set up the room can help with cleanup or complicate the problem. If toys are in deep bins and toy chests, children must empty all the bins to find the one toy they are searching for. All these toys on the floor lead to overstimulated children. Frustration sets in when they have to put away the extra toys before playing. And, as they are putting away the mess, they often are distracted by another toy.

A simple solution is to **display toys in an organized manner on open shelves.** The child can see and reach exactly what he is searching for.

Each toy's space should be labeled to encourage easy cleanup. Trace around the toy, or secure a picture of it on the shelf where the actual toy belongs. Catalog pictures or instant-developing photographs work well. For variety, place toys, puzzles, or other items on a copy machine that has the ability to reduce the image. Use the cut-out copies as labels. Use words combined with pictures to label some places. Cover labels with clear, adhesive-backed paper. At clean-up time, children match real items to their pictures or outlines.

Place similar toys together. Sort blocks by size and place each size in its own place on a labeled, open shelf. Place strips of masking tape on a low shelf to form a parking lot for cars and trucks.

Place hard hats and tools in the construction area. Hang pots, pans and kitchen utensils according to size on a pegboard. Outline each item on the board to help children find the right hook when they tidy the kitchen. Hang dress-up clothes on labeled hooks. The blue shirt has a small picture of a blue shirt above its hook; the wedding dress hangs below a bride's picture.

Store crayons in clear plastic cups with all of one color in each cup. Children will only take what they need and will practice sorting skills as they put crayons away. Place different sizes of art paper in separate open boxes or baskets. Label each. Put scraps of construction paper in another labeled container. Let children help you label these.

Help children learn clean-up skills by beginning the school year with a minimum of items in the classroom. During daily circle time for the first few weeks, show children where classroom equipment goes. Model putting things away and give children opportunities to practice. Introduce new classroom items during circle time, and let children practice putting them away.

When the cleanup seems overwhelming to children, help them break the job down into smaller tasks. Give suggestions: *"John, put away just the yellow things in the Games Center." "Rafael, put away the small square blocks." "Alicia, put the small trucks on the red shelf. Lee, put the large trucks on the bottom shelf."* Always remind children to come see you when they finish that job. Then you can suggest another.

With help and encouragement, your children will become so adept at putting things away, all you'll need to do is supervise. You'll have taught a valuable life skill and saved yourself many hours of classroom frustration.

BEGIN WITH A BOX!

by Jeannine Perez

Boxes are freebies that are available to everyone. Use all sizes and shapes for creative projects. Boxes can be used to encourage dramatic play, problem-solving games, giant art projects, and also can help you organize your resources.

BIG BOXES

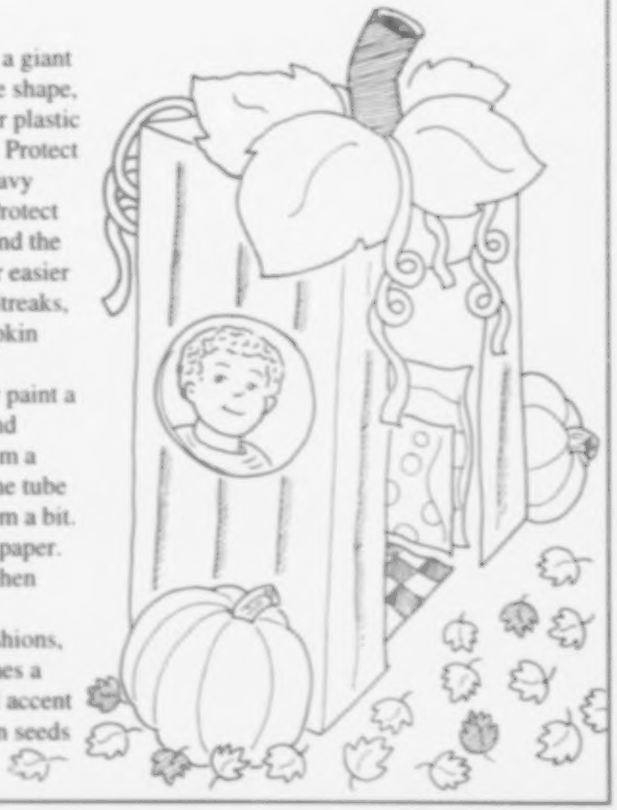
Bring an appliance box into your room and it can become a wonderful part of a unit. Ask your children to help plan and draw any windows and doors, then cut openings with a sharp knife (I do this part after hours), and it is ready to decorate and enjoy. Boxes can be anything you like. The only limits are the ingenuity and imagination of your class.

PUMPKIN HOUSE

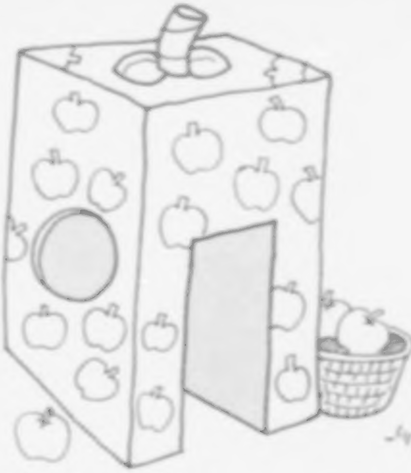
For a fall shelter, change your box into a giant pumpkin. Read stories about pumpkins, and talk about the shape, uses, and colors of pumpkins. Add red to yellow in a clear plastic container so that children can watch the changes of color. Protect your floor with a tarp, many layers of newspapers, or a heavy sheet of plastic (or carry the box outdoors for painting). Protect children with paint smocks, and give them wide brushes and the tempera paint. You can mix some soap with the paints for easier clean-up. Take a few photos of the process, if possible. Streaks, missed places and different shades can only give the pumpkin character!

When the pumpkin house is dry, help children draw or paint a few vertical lines for pumpkin ridges, and create a stem and tendrils (instead of a chimney) at the top. Form a tube from a large (12-18 inch) sheet of green construction paper, fill the tube with crumpled newspapers, then bend and crumple the stem a bit. Tendrils are fun to make by twisting strips of green crepe paper. Children can check pictures of pumpkin leaves in books, then draw and cut out their own.

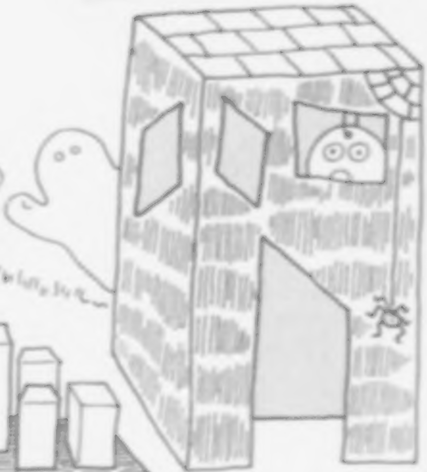
The inside of the pumpkin could be furnished with cushions, books, and a few stuffed toys. The pumpkin house becomes a quiet hideaway, scenery for dramatic play, and a giant fall accent for your room. Make pumpkin bread and roasted pumpkin seeds for an appropriate snack.



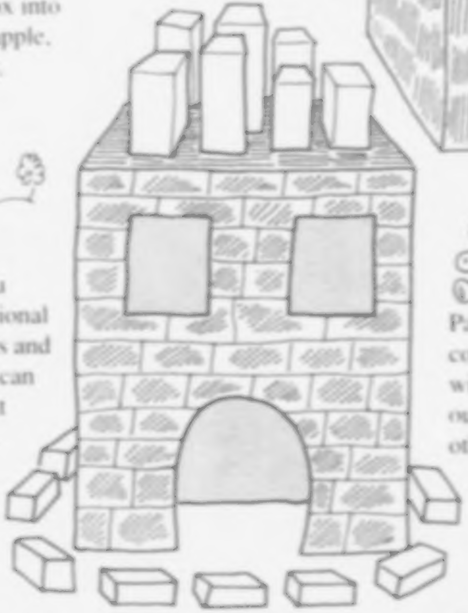
MORE BIG BOXES



Make a huge box into a giant potato, apple, or green pepper.

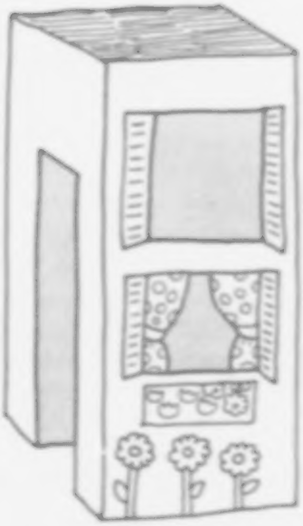


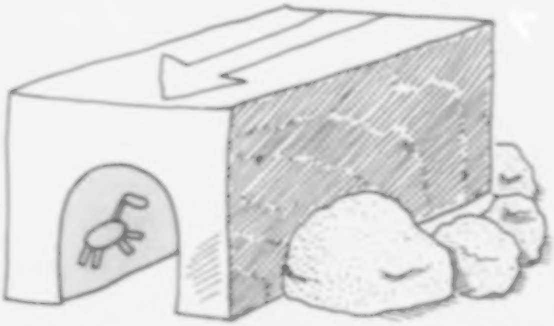
Make a non-threatening haunted house by painting the box with gray and using a sponge and black paint to add a stone or brick facade, cutting crooked doors and windows, and decorating with spider webs, and strange faces peeking out around the corners.



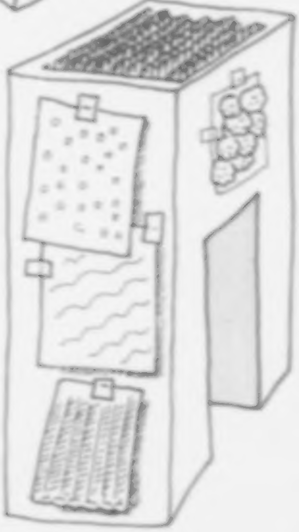
For a castle, you might add additional boxes for towers and turrets. Blocks can represent a moat around the box.

Paint the box to look like a cottage with shutters and window boxes. Use it to act out "The Three Bears" and other favorite tales.





Make the box a cave by cutting an arch opening or turning the box on its side. (This can also form a tunnel). Use boxes that have seen better days for your caves. Paint them brown, black, gray, or a combination. You can even add cave drawings to the inside walls.

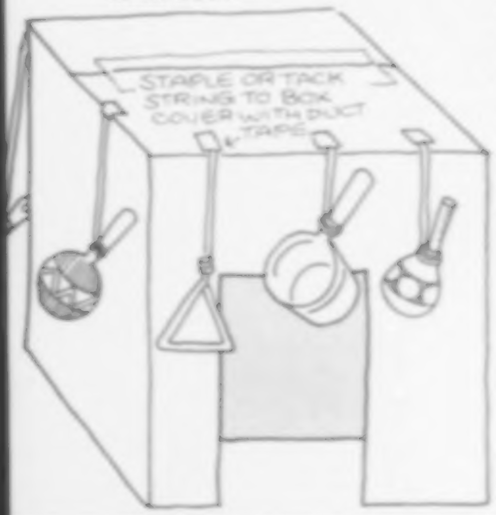


Make a texture house by covering the inside and outside with rug samples, fabric remnants, sandpaper, corrugated cardboard, and plastic. Encourage children to close their eyes and just let their hands "see" the house.

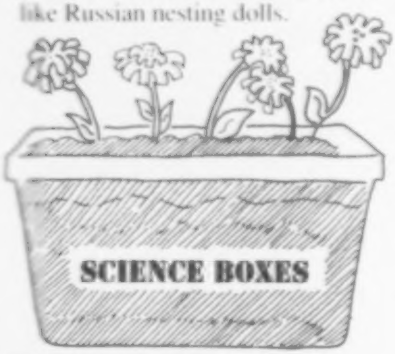
Make a noisy house by attaching noisemakers inside and out. Use shakers, rattles, bells, drums, etc. This is rather hard on the box so it could also be the last transformation before the box heads for the trash.

SMALL BOXES

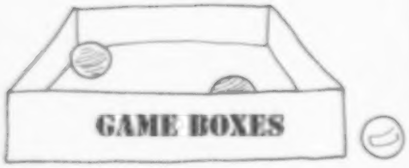
- Let children practice wrapping and unwrapping a box for increased fine motor coordination.
- Give children a wrapped box and take turns guessing what is inside, based on information they have...size, shape, and the sound heard when the box is shaken.
- Encourage children to make up stories about what could be inside boxes of different shapes and sizes.
- Let children draw what could be inside a box.


STAPLE OR TACK STRING TO BOX COVER WITH DUCT TAPE

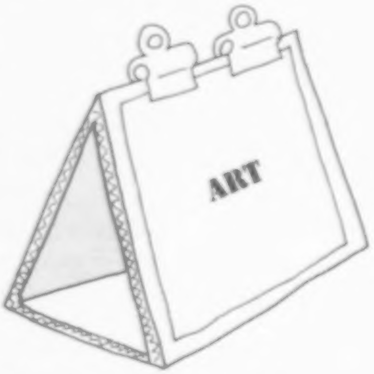
- Talk about sizes and shapes of boxes, and what could be placed in each size of box. *"Would your ball fit in that box?" Could you fit into this box?"*
- Encourage more specific vocabulary of descriptive terms. Decide together if a box is flat, round, narrow, rectangular square, wide, or tall.
- Boxes that nest can be decorated like Russian nesting dolls.



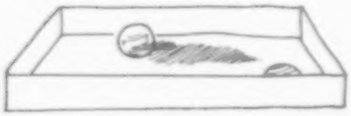
- Make a greenhouse from clear, plastic boxes with lids and drainage holes in the bottom. (Fruit often comes in these containers.) Fill with potting soil and plant easily grown seeds (marigolds, beans, or corn).
- Create science experiment boxes. Collect and store everything needed for simple science experiments in boxes.
- Let children make dioramas from box lids. Draw simple scenes on cardboard, add tiny figures, rocks, twigs, or other nature materials, and make scenes from favorite stories.



- Make obstacle courses with boxes of different sizes.
- Smaller flat boxes or lids can also become marble games or tracks for small cars.



- Cut out the bottom of a box, across one side, and refold the box into a large triangle. Use it as a tabletop easel.
- Cut construction paper (or use the blank sides of computer or junk mail paper) to fit in the lid of a box for marble painting. Put bright colors of tempera paint in small containers with marbles and plastic spoons to remove paint-covered marbles. Let children roll the marbles from side to side in the lid. Sometimes add sprinkles of glitter to the wet paint.



MORE IDEAS

COMMUNITY HELPERS

■ Boxes can become a firehouse, police station, hospital, school, or library.

◆ Boxes can also become caves, volcanoes, mountains, tunnels, spaceships, or apartment buildings.

■ Use boxes for a transportation unit. Depending on the size, strength, and shape of your box, they can become cars, buses, trucks, fire engines, even space craft and transportation for the future. Use boxes and real steering wheels mounted on wooden frames, or paper or aluminum plated and children-made details.

■ Make a story box. A square box works well. Wrap the box and lid separately, and fill the box with small items that inspire storytelling...small dolls or puppets, pictures, natural items like feathers and rocks, multicultural items, etc. Boxes can contain a small bag of farmer's wheat used in telling "The Little Red Hen", a soft and non-threatening Gunniwolf puppet, Sylvester's magic red pebble, a small picture of a castle, a small stuffed mouse, a few cloth flowers, and a "magic" paintbrush. Children can choose an item, and stories can be classic favorites, or improptu stories. Encourage children to make their own small story boxes and tell stories to teachers, other children, pets, or stuffed animals.

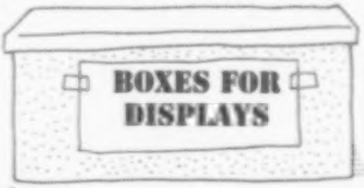
◆ Use a large appliance box to make a puppet theater. Stand it upright, and cut away a large window. Or take it apart and make it into a folding screen with an opening in the center section.

ORGANIZING WITH BOXES

◆ Use copy paper boxes with lids as file cabinets that are free. Make clear labels for one end if the boxes are stacked.

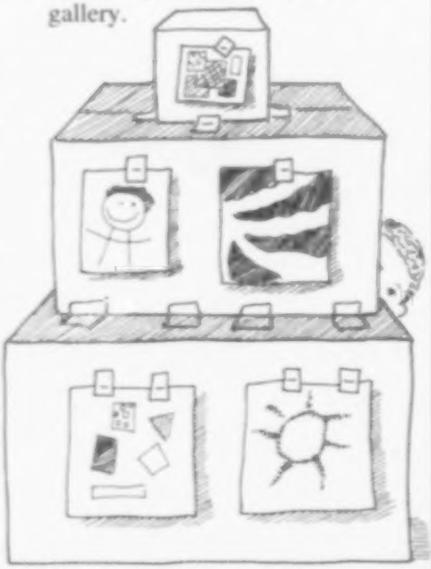
■ Create theme boxes or multicultural trunks. It takes a long time to collect what's needed for a unit. When you have gathered appropriate items for a unit, and the unit is over, store collected items, examples of art projects, books, cards with songs and fingerplays, and any comments in a box. Label the lid and one end with a small picture or symbol of the unit.

■ Start a recipe box of successful classroom recipes. Sort them into snack recipes, recipes sent by parents, and recipes that are easily done with the help of your children. Save room on each card for your own comments.



◆ Make a tower of boxes, and mount art work on each level.

■ Flatten a large box and use it as a stand-up screen for an art gallery.



SETTING THE STAGE

by Donna Bird

Those of us working with pre-schoolers have a tremendous opportunity, as well as a tremendous responsibility. It is our job to get every child off to the best start possible by encouraging and teaching these needed tools: curiosity, imagination, a love of learning, good people skills, and a positive self-image.

To encourage children's **curiosity**, let them know that asking questions at school is okay. Parents don't always have the time or energy to answer all of these questions, but teachers should. Be curious yourself and show children how you find answers to your questions. Allow children to ask questions of other children during Sharing Time, on field trips, or of guests.

A good way to encourage **imagination** in children is to provide guidelines and "jumping off points" for them. Read lots of stories and they will discover that stories have form: a beginning, middle, and end. Teach songs, games, and dances, and children will learn about tunes, rules, and dance steps. Provide props for dramatic play. Do crafts that teach pasting, cutting, and coloring techniques. When children have these basic tools, they will be confident enough to create on their own.

A **love of learning** is something most children come with, and something we as teachers and caregivers need to help keep alive. Teach by example. Keep your attitude towards learning positive. Show your excitement and enthusiasm for new discoveries, even about things that to you may be "old news." Recognizing squares or the color blue may be something a child couldn't do yesterday, but today he can! Encourage the idea of working towards a goal and finding success. This will stay with a child and help him as he faces more challenging learning situations.

Learning how to **get along with others** is a most important and necessary skill. Some children in your group may not have had to deal with other children their own age before. You can help each child get along with the others. Children must learn that there are rules for group behavior and consequences to inappropriate behavior. Make a picture chart to remind children of behavior rules. Include what may not be done (We do not bite!) and what should be done. (We throw scraps in the waste basket.)

Keep things simple at first and add rules as they become necessary. Make sure that children understand the consequences of their actions (time-out chair, privileges taken away). And most importantly, if you make rules, keep them! Encourage sharing, caring about others, and helpfulness whenever possible.

School is a place where children are often put into categories. They will be thought of as "brains," "troublemakers," "clowns," etc. These categories, although perhaps pointing out a child's tendencies, often limit his own expectations. We need to encourage each child to feel positive about himself. Make eye contact with every child every day. This lets children know you are aware of them. Use smiles, hugs, encouraging words, and praise often. Be positive and helpful with criticism. We want children to accept that no one is perfect at anything, but we can all improve with practice. Admit when you make a "not so perfect" circle on the board. Show children you can do better and try again.

Being a child's first teacher is an awesome responsibility. But by being caring, observant, and positive towards each child, you can set the stage for wonderful years of learning.

MORE THAN ONE WAY TO LEARN

by Sally Bing

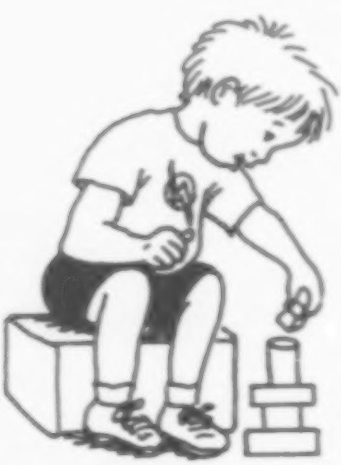
It's September. School is just beginning. Let us look at our children with new eyes and ears to discover their strengths and plan activities to enhance those strengths so that every child has a successful beginning. Howard Gardner in his book *Multiple Intelligences: The Theory into Practice* (Basic Books) has suggested that we possess seven different types of intelligence. The types of intelligence are described below and on the next page.

Interestingly, most teachers of young children make use of these intelligences in their daily activities without referring to them as such. Gardener's theory supports the way early childhood educators teach.

Planning activities to take into account each intelligence helps ensure every child an opportunity to learn by his strengths while developing other iskills. Let's look at how a lesson on rain could encompass all seven intelligences.

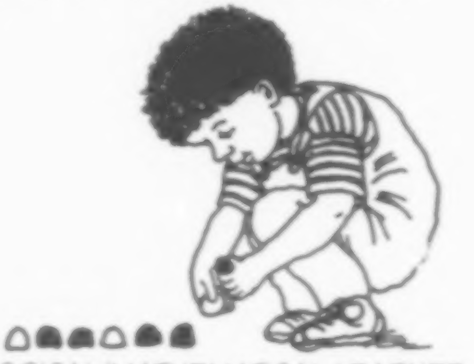
The teacher reads a story about rainy days. Children describe the weather or dramatize how they feel about it **(verbal/linguistic).** They count seconds between thunder claps, measure rain fall, make a graph showing how many days in the week were rainy, or determine what type of clothing they should wear **(logical/mathematical).** They illustrate different types of weather or find pictures of rain **(visual/spatial)**. They perform a rain dance or pretend they are clouds getting bigger and heavier with moisture just waiting to open up and pour **(bodily/kinesthetic).** They sing songs about the rain ("Rain, Rain, Go Away") or sound out the rhythm of raindrops on a window pane **(musical/rhythmic).** They work together to develop a weather mural or talk with one another during circle time **(interpersonal).** They spend time quietly alone listening to the rain and pretending what they would do if they were a rain drop **(intrapersonal).**

Not every lesson lends itself to all seven intelligences, but with a little creativity many will. Let's give our children a new beginning. Each child is special and deserves the opportunity to develop in her own way.



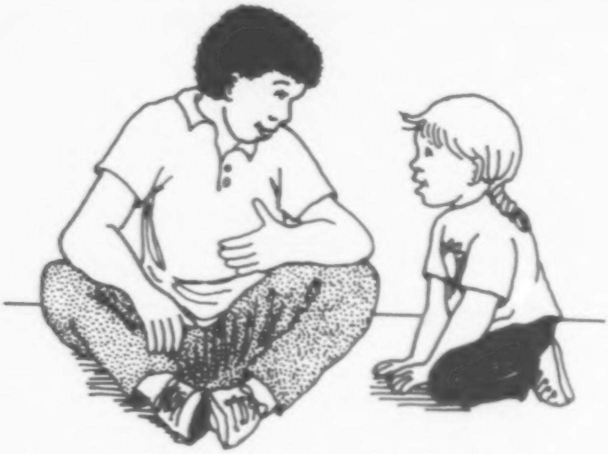
VISUAL/SPATIAL LEARNER

These children enjoy putting together puzzles, draw and paint well, or are good at building with blocks and Legos and have visual/spatial strengths.



LOGICAL/MATHEMATICAL LEARNER

Children with this strength enjoy solving problems. They are quick to find patterns. They enjoy numbers and counting. They are curious and often ask why and how.

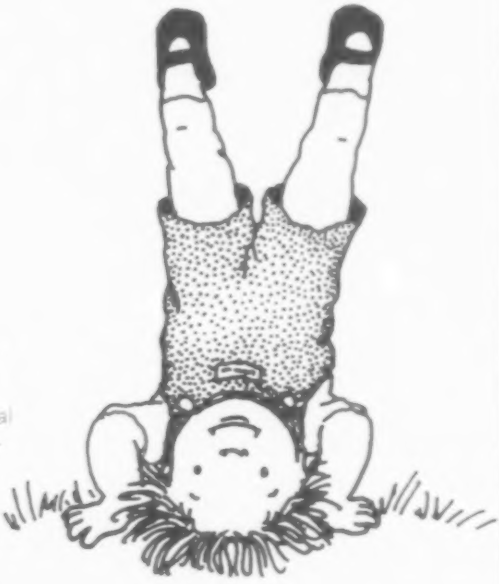


VERBAL/LINGUISTIC LEARNER

Children with verbal/linguistic intelligence are good at expressing themselves with words. They love to hear and to make up stories and nursery rhymes. They enjoy jokes, riddles, and tongue twisters.

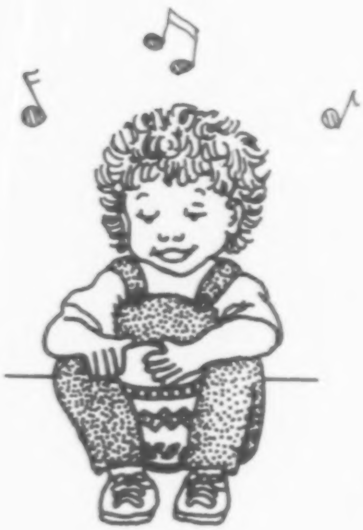
BODILY/KINESTHETIC LEARNER

Most pre-schoolers enjoy movement, but some show advanced physical coordination. They run, jump, and throw better than their peers. They may demonstrate strength in fine motor activities such as finger painting or learning to print.



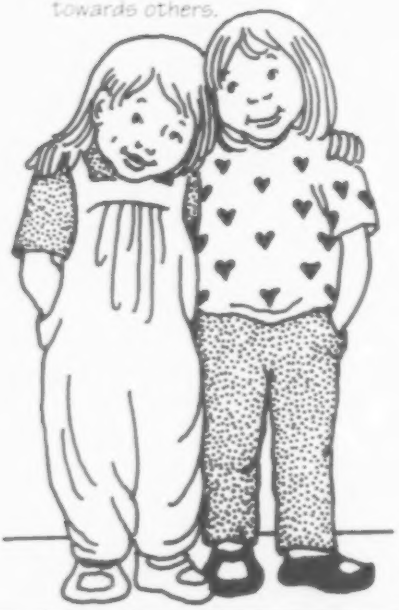
INTERPERSONAL LEARNER

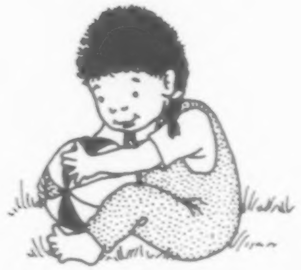
Some children are natural leaders attracting other children to them. These children have special abilities in interpersonal intelligence. They are outgoing and empathetic towards others.



MUSICAL/RHYTHMIC LEARNER

Children with musical intelligence love to create or listen to music. They hum, sing, and keep time to the music from an early age.





INTRAPERSONAL LEARNER

Other children prefer to play alone. They may be quiet or inner directed, but are nonetheless self-confident. They are at peace with themselves.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

BEGIN WITH CRITICAL THINKING

by Sherry Burrell

When we talk about "critical" thinking skills, what do we mean? Most of us agree that it is important for children to use "critical thinking skills," but some of us wonder if this is just one more "fad" term—fuzzy in its description and broad in its application. Many of us are very unclear about how to actually teach it.

WHAT ARE CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS?

One way to look at critical thinking skills is to imagine them as the "very important" (critical) skills children use when they approach a learning task. These skills, when broken down into their component parts, help a child to "find fault" (constructively criticize), "carefully analyze or make judgements" (critical analysis), and look at the world in a way that opens up new possibilities—maybe even "take risks."

One educational organization in Massachusetts has attempted to teach these skills head on. It is called "Talents Unlimited," and it is a program taught by The NETWORK, Inc. in Andover, MA. [The NETWORK, Inc., 300 Brickstone Square, Andover, MA 01810]. Training in "Talents Unlimited" focuses on five basic skills: productive thinking, communication, forecasting, decision-making and planning. It emphasizes practical strategies that help teachers to get children to use higher order thinking skills in the classroom. While this program is designed for children in grades K-8, preschool teachers can easily adapt the material.

A TYPICAL "CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS" DAY

Imagine children arriving at school, and as they enter the classroom, an "apple" greets them! (Prepare an "apple puppet" ahead of time.) Each child is challenged to think of appropriate responses, and to suggest additional things an apple might say (COMMUNICATION)! The teacher tape records each child's ideas, writes them on an apple-shaped paper, and the child hangs her "apple words" on a branch that will become a "talking apple tree."

During circle time, children are inspired to let their IMAGINATION go wild by suggesting lots of different ways to get all the apples off of an apple tree. Their suggestions could be practical or just plain silly, since the point is to let them think freely without fear of a "wrong" answer. One child may suggest using ladders and pails, while another may think of asking for help from the giant in "Jack and the Beanstalk." Accept all ideas! This is an activity that stretches the mind.

CRTICAL THINKING IN YOUR LEARNING CENTERS

When children work in learning centers, be sure that each center offers opportunities for "brain" exercise! Here are some ideas.

- **Blocks** Use a floor playmat or a large piece of paper to clearly define a specific area. Encourage children to talk about what they PLAN to build before they actually build it. When a child plans first, she must IMAGINE, VISUALIZE, and EXPLAIN IDEAS before putting the plan into action. (Please note: because it is also important for young children to freely explore with block construction, this should only be an occasional and/or optional use of the block area.)
- **Dramatic Play** Tell children the story of Johnny Appleseed. Have props available to encourage children to act out or pantomime Johnny's adventures. Johnny went barefoot, wore a cooking pot for a hat, made friends with the animals and carried a bag of apple seeds wherever he went! Provide small pots of dirt and let children actually plant apple seeds or other small seeds!

Science Put some of the planted seed pots in a sunny window, and put some in a dark corner of the room. In each location, water half and leave the other half dry. Ask children to predict or **FORECAST** what will happen to each of the containers of seeds.

Cooking/Snack Have apples of different types or sizes on display (one for each child). Each child takes a turn to touch, smell, hold, and count the apples. Ask each child to DESCRIBE what she feels, smells, sees, and (later) tastes. Make a large chart of words (divided by the different senses), and add each word to the appropriate part of the chart. Ask children to describe to you what is inside of an apple before they cut it open (VISUAL MEMORY), then to describe it again after they cut it open. Challenge some children to guess or FORECAST the number of seeds that will be inside the apple then have them find and count the seeds.

Language Provide two large posters, photos, or drawings—one of an apple tree (without the apples on it) and the other of an apple. Ask children to look at each picture and ask them this question: *"If you could have an apple or an apple tree, which would you want?"* This type of question has no wrong answers, and it encourages children both to think about what matters to them (using their own CRITERIA) and to MAKE A DECISION. Help them think about this question by asking them what they could do with each item, and in what way they think each item might be better than the other one. For very young children, the two choices might be a real apple or a fake apple (or a large apple or a small apple).

Art/Fine Motor Skills Provide a very simple outline of an apple shape. Challenge children to change or TRANSFORM the shape into something else altogether by adding lines and colors to it. Show children that they can turn the paper in any direction they want to, and can make the shape become anything at all! This type of brain-stretching encourages CREATIVITY, and teaches the child to draw on past experiences to create new ones. "Apples" may become people, animals, houses, flowers, letters, numbers, dragons, or who-knows-what!

Movement/Large Motor After your class has had lots of experiences with apples and apple trees, a guided imagery exercise can help them express all they have learned. In a group, suggest that children PRETEND to be planted seeds. Ask them how they feel under the dirt. Help them DESCRIBE what it feels like to be planted, and with a quiet, soothing voice, gently guide their CREATIVE MOVEMENT from planted seeds, to sprouted seeds, to small trees, to larger and larger trees. Ask how it feels when their first buds appear, how it smells when their flowers bloom, and what it feels like when all the apples begin to hang on their branches!

How do we teach "critical thinking skills"? The best way is to let our own imaginations loosen up a little, and sneak a bit of the zany, wacky, and unusual into our learning center activities. If we learn to stimulate and follow children's imaginations a little more, we'll not only laugh more, but we'll find that their brains s-t-r-e-t-c-h even farther than we thought they could!

A LIFE-LONG JOURNEY

by Cheryl Markovic

When I'm on my journey don't you weep after me,
When I'm on my journey don't you weep after me,
When I'm on my journey don't you weep after me,
I don't want you to weep after me!

Every little kitten must grow up to be a cat,
Every little kitten must grow up to be a cat,
Every little kitten must grow up to be a cat,
I don't want you to weep after me!

(chorus)

Every little girl must grow up to be a woman,
Every little girl must grow up to be a woman,
Every little girl must grow up to be a woman,
I don't want you to weep after me!

(chorus)

Every little boy must grow up to be a man,
Every little boy must grow up to be a man,
Every little boy must grow up to be a man,
I don't want you to weep after me!

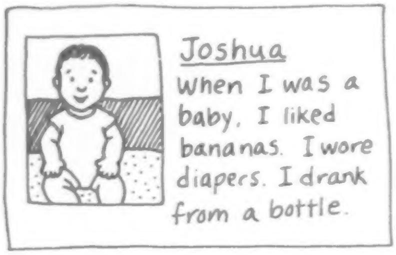
Life is a journey, a process. It is important for "first teachers" to be involved with process and not focus on product; we must all look at our lives as an evolving work in progress. The suggestions below are somewhat involved, but worth the effort. The theme can be used and updated all year; it makes a good getting-to-know-you lesson for the beginning of the school year.

Just as the song says, there are certain aspects of life where there are no choices: kittens grow to become cats; tadpoles grow to become frogs; girls and boys grow to become women and men; that's the process. The song is sung with a constant beat and with children clapping hands for rhythm. Have some good pictures of baby animals and adult animals so children can compare the differences. Talk about all the different beginnings that baby animals experience. Baby chicks hatch from eggs and look very different from adult chickens. Encourage your children to name animals, write a list and keep it visible for when you sing the song. Children love to think up different animal babies.

Help children understand the process of life by observing the different stages all people pass through. Start with yourself! Bring in photos of when you were a baby, a child, a teenager, *etc.*; this helps children to visually experience the growing process by seeing how you have changed. Tell stories of how each stage of your life leads to the next stage. *"When I was two, I learned to go on the potty and not use a diaper anymore. I learned to swim when I was five. When I was six I learned to read..."*

Start a baby poster. Request that parents and guardians bring in baby pictures of all their children. Don't label the photos with names, ask children if they can tell who the babies are. Then ask each child to identify herself. Ask children to try to remember when they were babies. What foods did they like? Did they drink from a bottle? Did they wear diapers? Write their responses to show them respect and validate their beginnings. Write each name clearly; children love to recognize their names. Then attach the baby picture next to their responses. They will love to show the poster to everyone who comes to your room.

Don't forget to include your baby photo and remembrances; it will again illustrate how everyone has a beginning.



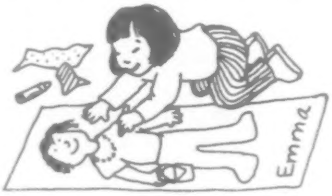
Joshua

When I was a baby, I liked bananas. I wore diapers. I drank from a bottle.

To enhance the theme of beginnings and life's journey, have parents and guardians bring in baby and adult pictures of themselves and their parents (the child's grandparents)—anyone who is important in their child's life. This time, mount and label the baby pictures on a poster. Have children tell about the photos and explain who they are. Be patient; you might have to help children know who is who! By including grandparents, aunts, uncles, and close friends, you will be aiding children to understand how families are multi-generational. All of us learn from each generation. Take the time to notice any similarities between family members; remember to give equal importance to differences and the unique qualities we all possess. Invite children to study how they looked as babies and compare their picture to the ones of their parents and grandparents. *"Oresti, look you have brown eyes just like your mom and grandmother!" "Falicia, your skin is like your dad's."* Lots of children have special names for grandparents, ask your children if they have a special name for theirs.

These suggestions may start and stop with the interest of your children. You can work one-on-one or at circle time. If children lose interest, you can save the next step for a new teaching unit. If they are still enthusiastic, the next stage of our journey teaching young children is to have children compare the baby pictures with the adult photos. Observe how the adult features have changed and stayed the same. *"Rosellen, your mommy's hair is brown, just like when she was a baby!" "Darian, your dad didn't have any hair when he was little, but you had lots of hair when you were a baby."* Have children hold up the adult pictures next to the baby pictures. Talk about what the adults like to do as adults, things they couldn't do as babies. *"Daddy likes to read books." "Mommy drives the car." "Baba (grandmother) works in a store."* Everyone is different from when they were a baby.

Ask children what they will do when they are adults. What clothes will they wear? Where will they live? Trace your children's bodies on large paper, or depending on their development, have them trace each other. Ask them to "dress" their images as adults. Give them lots of fabric, glue, and crayons. At circle time or individually, ask each child to explain what she has created. What will they do when they are women and men? Display the images at the child's eye level; children love to share their work with one another.



Part of any journey is the end. For our journey through life, death is the end. Be prepared for questions on death. Some children might have experienced the death of a family member. You might have lost someone close. Make it clear that it is okay to talk about death, even though it is sad. Death is part of the process, but make it clear that all stages of life are important. Being a child and growing is important because we learn every step of the way through life's journey.

START WITH SCIENCE

by Ellen Javernick

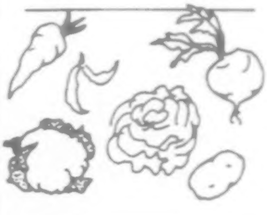
"This year I'm going to do more with science," I vowed as I wrote out my goals and objectives for the year. I'd always included science units in my curriculum, but I felt that daily science sometimes got slighted. When I announced my resolution to the other teachers in my building, they commented that they too felt sometimes shorted on science. *"How about having a Science Symposium?"*

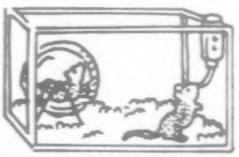
We all agreed that this was a great idea. Not only would it encourage us to emphasize science, it would tell the community, parents, and children that science concepts are important for children to explore.

We decided to have our Science Symposium in the fall. Because our Science Symposium was especially for preschoolers and kindergartners, we decided to select activities and things they could touch and play with. We also felt that since we were involving parents, we should display books and resources to use at home.

We checked with the hospital, the Red Cross, dentist and doctor parents, a pet shop, people that we knew who had interesting collections or unusual animals. We tried to select activities that would be suitable for twos as well as children five or six. We recruited parent volunteers to help at various stations. Then we decided which activities to put in each of the three rooms. We included a book rack in each room to display books. In the halls between rooms, we had a display of adult books and other resource material. These are some of the activities we chose to include in our symposium.

TWO AND THREE-YEAR OLD ROOM





▲ **Zoo Animals** Cages were made of bookshelves with zoo animal pictures taped to them. A big laundry basket of stuffed animals was on the floor nearby so that children could match the animals to their cages.

▲ **Fruits and Vegetables** The walls in the family living area were covered with pictures of fruits and vegetables. A flannelboard divider contained corresponding flannel-backed shapes and bowls contained real fruit for an area supervisor to cut with children.

▲ **Light and Color** This area contained prisms, a bowl, and mirror for "catching rainbows", color overlay puzzles, etc. It also contained water-filled ice cube trays, medicine droppers, and coffee filters on a covered table. Paint shirts were handy for the aide to put on children when she added food coloring to some of the clear water. Children could mix colors and drop them onto the coffee filters.

▲ **Sink and Float** Our water table was filled with warm water and a variety of objects for visitors to classify. We also included several sections of plumbing pipe for older children to experiment with when they visited the room.

▲ **Visiting Animals** We put our small caged mammals in this room.

THREE AND FOUR-YEAR OLD ROOM

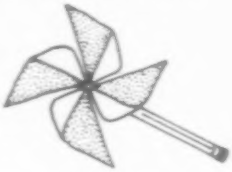
▲ **Office of Doctor T. Brush** The family living area was converted into a dentist's office complete with waiting room, receptionist's desk, and dental chair. The local dentists' wives group provided free brushes and coloring books to be taken home, and a giant set of teeth for small dentists to work on.

▲ **Rockets** Pictures of rockets and a giant rocket that children could climb into were set up near the easels in the art area. Children could reinforce their learning by painting rockets blasting off.

▲ **Shells** The walls in this area were covered with pictures of shells. A soft flannel sheet covered the tables where the shells we placed. Children could match shells to the pictures we had on cards.

▲ **Dinosaurs** We displayed our dinosaur puzzles and small dinosaurs to match up with those in pictures. Visitors in this area could trace around dinosaur patterns and take their tracings home.

▲ **Wind and Weather** Homemade pinwheels were the hit of this area. We sent copies of the directions home with children. We also had a fingernail polish dryer and a variety of objects for children to test to see if the "wind" would blow them. The aide at this table blew up balloons so that children could feel the force of the air escaping from them. Giant people puppets at the flannelboard on the floor nearby were waiting to be dressed appropriately for the weather.



▲ **Magnets** Children could experiment here with all types of magnets. They tried fishing with the fishing lines we provided. Masking tape made a great pond.

FIVE-YEAR OLD ROOM

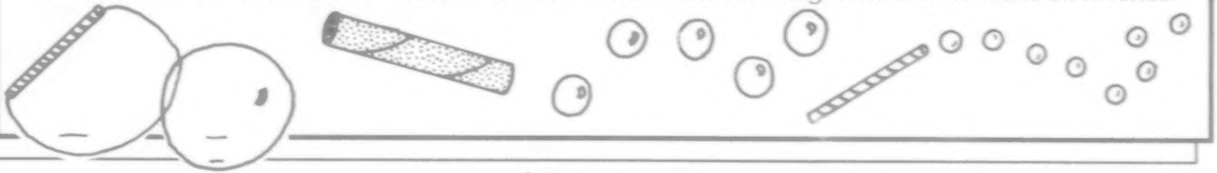
▲ **Office of Dr. Goodhealth** We used a large area in our largest room for the doctor's office and other related activities. Doll cribs held patients, ministered to by visiting doctors and nurses who donned the appropriate dress-up clothes. In addition to our play doctor kits, we had several real stethoscopes and children's blood pressure cuffs. The windows in this area were covered with x-rays, and on a nearby table we had set up two real microscopes. An anatomically correct dummy borrowed from the nursing school was on display. Volunteers in this area all had medical backgrounds so they could answer questions.

▲ **The Five Senses** Along one wall we mounted feely pictures at almost floor level. A feely box and blindfold were close by. Sound shakers and smelly jars were on small white tables, and on a larger table we placed a supply of white paper and two boxes of smelly markers.

▲ **Rocks** We put out our large magnifying glasses so children could examine the crystals in geodes and compare the other rocks in our collections. A borrowed rock polisher was used to demonstrate how "dirty old rocks" were changed into "jewels"!

▲ **Volcanoes** This was probably the most popular area of the symposium. Some children would have spent the morning making their volcanoes erupt. On the volcano table, we placed several cookie sheets. On the sheets we set up mountains made of composition hot caps (found at plant nurseries). We'd dipped the points in water and pushed them in the softened cardboard to form craters. A baby food jar of vinegar, a medicine dropper, a baby food jar of baking soda, and a spoon were on each tray. Children alternately added the vinegar and soda and watched their volcanoes bubble.

▲ **Bubbles** On a newspaper-covered table, we set out several trays of of warm soapy water, straws, tubes of different sizes, and straws threaded with string to form different shapes. Workers in this area had read the Boston Children's Museum book on bubbles and encouraged children to make discoveries.



IN THE

BOOK CORNER

BEGIN WITH A BOOK

by Karel Kilimnik

Beginnings can mean a new season, the start of a new activity or schedule, or looking at something just a bit differently.

Marcy in *City Green* by DyAnne DiSalvo-Ryan (Morrow) and her friend Miss Rosa look at the empty lot between two houses in their neighborhood (*"This block looks like a big smile with one tooth missing."*) and start the ball rolling to turn it into a community garden. This shows that even an empty littered city lot can have a new beginning. Their diverse group of neighbors, eventually including Old Man Hammer (*"hard as nails"*) comes together to clean, plant, schmooze, and enjoy the fruits of their collective effort. DiSalvio-Ryan includes a list of things you can do to start a community garden in your neighborhood. '(She is also donating a portion of her royalties to the American Community Gardening Association.)

Juan Zanate (named after black zanate birds who always follow him) yearns for a new beginning as a farmer. Alas, when his father dies there is only enough land for his two older brothers and Juan must hire himself out to the shopkeepers in his small town in Mexico.

People laugh at him for his dreams so he decides to visit the wise old man in his town who lends him a small plot of land. With the help of his friends, the zanate birds, Juan succeeds in beginning his life as a farmer on his own land. This lovingly told tale *The Harvest Birds/ Los Pajaros de la Cosecha* by Blanca Lopez de Mariscal (Children's Book Press) is written in both English and Spanish.

Marisabina Russo captures many children's feelings and anxieties arising in September in *I Don't Want to Go Back to School* (Greenwillow). Ben's anxieties about returning to school rise to the surface and his older sister Hannah delights in tormenting him. Ben's fears are very real...*"What if I don't know the answer"? "What if my teacher is mean"? "What if I don't know anybody in my class"?* Fortunately his parents are very supportive. This book provides an opportunity for children to talk about their concerns and fears. Bright, colorful illustrations keep the mood cheerful and upbeat throughout the story.

How many times have you said, *"I got up at the crack of dawn?"* Young Lisa takes this phrase quite seriously; especially when her big brother informs her that if the dawn cracks, the sun won't come up. Lisa awaits her mom's return from a business trip at the "crack of dawn." She wonders how to fix the crack so the day can begin and her mom will return in *Fixing the Crack of Dawn* by Erica Silverman (BridgeWater Books).

Lisa takes a tube of glue from her art box and ventures out late at night to find, and hopefully repair the "crack of dawn." Her wanderings take her past the little desert creatures around her house.

Rudy Rubenstein, the fruit and vegetable man, hops out of bed six mornings a week before the crack of dawn. Since he and Trudy, his wife, came to the United States almost 50 years ago, he has lovingly stacked his produce for people to buy.

Every morning before school, Sun Ho, a recently arrived immigrant, stopped at Ruby's stand to "watch Rudy work his magic."

Roni Schotter has created a loving tale in *A Fruit and Vegetable Man* (Little, Brown) in which the paths of an old man and a young boy intersect. As Rudy decides to move out of the city and begin a new life growing vegetables, Sun Ho and his family begin their new life in this country by taking over Rudy's fruit and vegetable stand.

BEGIN WITH ABC

by Paula Gaj Sitarz

Alphabet books introduce children to letters and pictures of objects that begin with each letter. ABC books are a perfect beginning to the world of reading. Alphabet books are extremely diverse and original.

In 1975 Mitsumasa Anno revolutionized alphabet books with *Anno's Alphabet: An Adventure in Imagination* (Crowell). Each upper case letter of the alphabet is a three-dimensional wooden letter. The accompanying color picture is surrounded by a pen-and-ink border in which other objects with the same letter are hidden. For example, the letter F page has fairies and forget-me-nots in the border.

Allison's Zinnia by Anita Lobel (Greenwillow) is another work of art. Each letter of the alphabet is represented by a full page, vibrant, realistic painting of a flower. Children will see Beryl with begonias and Paulette with a peony.

On Market Street (Greenwillow) by Anita and Arnold Lobel is a visual delight. A child buys presents from A to Z in the stores on Market Street where each shopkeeper is made of his goods. Pre-schoolers will pour over the detailed beautiful illustrations of shopkeepers made of doughnuts, flowers, and ice cream.

Many alphabet books contain information beyond the ABCs. *The Handmade Alphabet* (Dial Books) by Laura Rankin presents the alphabet in American Sign Language. Each exquisite illustration in colored pencil shows a close-up of a hand making a manual letter. Each hand is linked in some creative way with an object that begins with that letter. For example, a ribbon is entwined in the hand signing the letter R.

In *Old Black Fly* (Henry Holt & Co.) Jim Aylesworth takes a different approach to the alphabet. A mischievous old black fly buzzes through the alphabet landing where he shouldn't and makes a mess. For the letter E, the fly frolics on the eggs for the birthday cake. Stephen Gammell's illustrations show eggs exploding on the page. For other letters, there are drips, splashes, and splotches. The illustrations and the text are funny, clever, and explosive.

Another clever and unique alphabet book is Cathi Hepworth's *Antics! An Alphabetical Anthology* (G.P. Putnam's Sons). Each letter is conveyed through a portrait of an ant character and an accompanying word that has "ANT" within it. "Brilliant" shows a scientist ant with flowing hair in his lab.

In Suse MacDonald's *Alphabetics* (Bradbury) the letters of the alphabet, bright bold blocks of color, are transformed in four stages and incorporated into twenty-six illustrations. For example, D transforms into a dragon and S turns into a swan in the sun.

David McPhail's *Animals A to Z* (Scholastic) is a participation alphabet book in which youngsters search large watercolor illustrations to find animals and other objects whose names begin with each letter of the alphabet. For the letter "B" children will find a soft, furry bear in a boat reading a book while a bird hovers nearby. If they explore further, they will see a bell on the boat, a bottle, a hot-air balloon, and a bridge in the background. There is a key to the illustrations for each letter at the end of the book.

Invite children to join Tom and Lucy in Shirley Hughes' *Lucy & Tom's a.b.c.* (Puffin). As the children listen to you read about Lucy and Tom's busy day, they'll be introduced in order to common words that begin with the letters from A to Z. The words in the text are depicted in the warm, detailed watercolors. When each letter appears at the beginning of a word in the text, the letter is printed in bold type.

STILL IN THE BOOK CORNER

SOMETHING NEW EVERYDAY

by Sandra L. Malcolm

The books selected for this Book Corner address the beginning of a new day, new things learned, growing up, and the first day of school. Each selection, in its own way, signifies the beginning of something important to the character of the story. The stories are all about events that occur in the everyday lives of young children.

TIME TO WAKE UP

by Marisabina Russo (Greenwillow) follows Sam and his mother through their morning ritual as they get ready for work and school.

BEFORE READING, ask children how they begin their day. How do they wake up? Have them tell you about their morning. Have a blanket and a pillow available. Invite children to act out a parent waking a child for school. Look at the picture on the cover. *"How is this mother waking up her son?"*

AFTER READING, ask children, *"How did the mother in our story wake Sam?" "What trick did Sam play on his mother?"* Ask if they have ever played a trick on someone. Invite them to tell everyone about it.

ACTIVITIES

◆ Take turns doing the story as a play. Leave the blanket and pillow in the dramatic play center to encourage re-enactment of the story.

◆ Write a class book titled "Time to Go to Bed!" Have children illustrate their book.

◆ Learn a wake-up song or make up one of your own.

◆ Sequence the events of the story. What happens first? Next? Last? Have children discover why things have to happen in order. (You can't go to school before you get out of bed.)

MY FRIENDS

by Taro Gomi (Chronicle Books) tells how a young girl learns many new things from her friends including animals, books, and people.

BEFORE READING, ask children, *"Have you ever learned to do something by watching someone or something else? Tell us about it." "What could we learn by watching animals?"* Write the responses on chart paper.

AFTER READING, say: *"Let's look at our list of things we said we could learn from animals. Are they the same things the girl in our story learned? Why or why not? What did she learn from books? From teachers? From friends?"*

ACTIVITIES

◆ Imitate the movements that the girl in the story learned from the animals. Make cards illustrated with movements like *walk*, *run*, and *jump*. Pull out a card and have children imitate that movement.

◆Make up other movements that could be learned from animals (wiggle like a worm, swim like a fish, etc.)

◆ What else could we learn by watching and imitating? (bounce like a ball, sway like a tree) Have children think of their own ideas; imitate the movement, and have the class guess what it is.

◆ Write the words "I learned to ______________" on a sheet of drawing paper. Have each child draw or paint a picture of something they learned to do from someone else. Create a bulletin board from the pictures.

NEVER SPIT ON YOUR SHOES

by Denis Cazet (Orchard Books) reveals how a young pup faces his first day at school as he and his mother share milk and cookies and talk. Cazet tells a story within a story by showing us what happens during the school day as well as when the mother and son share cookies.

BEFORE READING, show the cover of the book with the title covered. Ask children, *"What is taking place in the picture?" "Where do you think our story takes place?"* Uncover the title and read it aloud. Have children guess from the picture and the title what the story will be about.

AFTER READING, ask, *"How does the title fit into the story?"* What other classroom rules would your children suggest? Have children look closely at the classroom pictures. Discuss the many things happening throughout the room. *"Does this look like our classroom?" "Why or why not?"* Do children think Arnie is excited about going back to school tomorrow? Why or why not?

ACTIVITIES

◆ Make a list of class rules for your room. Include whatever is suggested by children.

◆ Have each child draw or paint a picture of something happening in the classroom. Paste balloons near the people in the picture. Write whatever the child says is being said by that person in the balloon. Bind the pictures into a class big book.

◆ Play a game of tag as the children did in the story.

◆ Share cookies and milk near the end of a school day as you talk about the day. Encourage children to remember as much about the day as possible.

◆ Have children cut pictures of animals from magazines and paste them on drawing paper. Use construction paper to make clothes for the animals. Draw a scene showing the animals doing "people things."

WHEN I GROW UP...

by Heidi Goennel (Little, Brown and Company) is about a young child who imagines all the things she will be able to do when she grows up.

BEFORE READING, ask children, "What things can you *do now that a baby cannot do?" "What will you be able to do when you grow up?"* Write the responses on chart paper to use after the story. Show the cover of the book. Ask children why they think the girl is standing on some books. *"Does the title When I Grow Up help you know what our story is going to be about?"*

AFTER READING, compare your list of things children said they would be able to do when they grow up to the things in the story. Are some things the same? Different? Ask children, *"Do you think grown ups ever wish they were little again? "Why?" "What could grownups do if they were little that they cannot do as big people?" "Do you think this story is real or make-believe?" "Why?" "Can everyone do the same things when they grow up?" "Does it matter if you are a boy or a girl?" "Why?"*

ACTIVITIES

◆ Make a class bulletin board around the title When I Grow Up... Have children draw pictures or cut pictures from magazines showing things they will be able to do when they grow up.

◆ Provide a variety of dress-up clothes and props in the dramatic play center to stimulate grown-up play.

◆ Sing songs and recite fingerplays about growing up.

◆ Have someone bring a baby to school so children can experience watching just what a baby can do. Compare hand size, foot size, height, etc. between the baby and children at school.

◆ Have children create an album depicting growth. Cut the pictures from magazines of people at all ages; doing age-appropriate activities.

◆ Invite an older person in to school to talk about and share pictures from his life. Encourage children to ask questions about the person growing up.

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FIRST TEACHER

Vol. 16 No. 6 *For People Who Care for Young Children* November/December 1995

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- Celebrate Diversity
- Prevent Holiday Crazies
- Provide a Holiday for Animals
- Create Celebration Boxes
- Make Ornaments from Nature
- Throw a "Party for Me"
- Develop the Spirit of Giving in Children
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CONTENTS

FEATURES:

Prevent the Holiday Crazies 8
The Giving Project 10
A Holiday for Animals 12
Ornaments from Nature 14
Celebrate with Song 15
Celebrate Diversity 16
Celebrate Around the World 22
Israeli Hanukkah 24
A Party for Me 26
Celebration Boxes 28
Celebrate with a Computer 30
Sharing Family Memories 31

DEPARTMENTS:

HELPFUL HINTS: Celebrate Every Day 5
TODDLER TIME: A Feast of Toddlers 8
A MAGNETIC STORY: Let's Celebrate 18

IN THE BOOK CORNER:

Explore with Celebrations 32
Stories for Thanksgiving 34
Celebrate December with Books 35

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

by Mary Beth Spann Minucci & Lisa Lyons Durkin

The once sacred tradition of celebrating winter holidays in the classroom has come under question in recent times. Some teachers try to acknowledge every known holiday that falls in the month of December; others ignore such celebrations altogether, while still others see nothing wrong with celebrating some holidays such as Christmas and Hanukkah (since these holidays dominate in the commercial "real world," anyway).

In deciding how you are going to respond to the holiday dilemma, it can help to realize and remember why we establish traditions at all with children. Unless you teach in a private or parochial school, religious roots are not usually the main focus of any celebration. So, there must be other reasons we take time to celebrate again and again. Here are some to ponder:

◆ Traditional celebrations are often festive and fun
◆ When we celebrate traditions, we are linked to a history of similar celebrations
◆ Traditions offer a rhythm to our days, months, and years
◆ Celebrations and traditions earmark the passing of time (and for children, mark their growth and development)
◆ Celebrations and traditions bond us together in a common experience

If these reasons makes you agree with the idea that children benefit from celebrations and traditions, but you're also ready for a change, maybe it's time to update what you do, or create some brand new traditions. This issue of *First Teacher* will give you lots of ideas for both.

Update your approach to the traditional holidays this season with ideas for Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Christmas, and Kwanzaa, along with creative ways to celebrate St. Lucia's Day and Los Posados. You'll find ideas for making ornaments form nature and an original holiday story that includes illustrations that can be used on a magnetic or flannelboard. Karen Stephens will help you "prevent those holiday crazies" and "A Giving Project" to benefit a needy child will put the emphasis on the joys of giving.

This issue will help you create some new celebrations throughout the year. How about "A Party for Me?" to boost self-esteem? Sherry Burrell encourages you to "celebrate diversity." And there are ideas for "Celebration Boxes"—from a lost tooth to the first flowers in the spring

Whatever holidays you celebrate at the end of 1995, we encourage you to celebrate your children and yourself!

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

✏ New contributor, *Terry L. Norton*, is a professor of Reading Education at Winthrop University in Rock Hill, SC. He teaches courses in Children's and Adolescent Literature. Terry also writes for other educational publications and presents at conferences. His interests include playing the recorder, browsing flea markets and lifting weights.

✏ Terry's co-author in this issue, *Carol S. Anfin*, is also a professor at Winthrop University. She teaches Early Childhood Methods courses. She is a new member of the Center for Pedagogy in the College of Education. Carol has been the director of a Child Development Center and a teacher in Kindergarten, first, and second grades in Oklahoma and Virginia. She has been involved in integrating special needs children into Early Childhood programs. One of Carol's special interests is storytelling.

Our apologies to Ava McVey, a new contributor! We misspelled her name in the September/October issue!

PHOTO CREDITS

Peter Lewin: cover, 8, 9, 15, 17

ART CREDITS

Debby Dixler: pages 12, 13, 19-21, 31

Janet McDonnell: pages 14, 28, 29

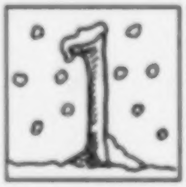
Catherine Minor: pages 10, 11, 22, 23, 26, 27

Nina Woldin: pages 5, 24, 25, 32, 33

HELPFUL HINTS

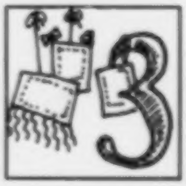
CELEBRATE EVERY DAY

by Gail P. Jones

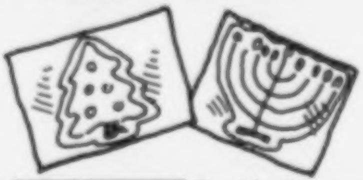


Keep in mind that all children come from different backgrounds and may or may not celebrate holidays in December. Plan for a celebration of winter or the end of 1995 so that everyone can feel a part of the celebration.

A fun way to learn about each other's family holiday traditions is to send home a teddy bear or other stuffed animal with each child for one night during the months of November and December. Send a note explaining that the parent should write down what the bear learned about their child's family traditions or preparations for a specific holiday. The child can share it with the class.



Take photos of class activities during the months of November and December. Turn them into ornaments or decorations by covering them with plastic and trimmings. Use them each year for memories of children and activities.



Put blank paper in the art and writing centers with assorted holiday stickers placed at random on them. Let children create stories using the stickers as cues. Put all pages together to make a book for the reading area.

Remind children that some of the best gifts are those that don't cost any money. Let children brainstorm ideas of gifts they can give to friends and relatives, such as visiting them or inviting them to tea. Let children decorate a poem or make a frame for a piece of artwork to give to a nursing home or hospital.

If you'd like to give children holiday gifts and don't want to spend a fortune, why not make multiple copies of an activity calendar of things to do that are fun and educational. For example, *Day l—Find a pine cone and spread it with peanut butter. Hang it outside for a hungry bird!*

December can be a hectic month for children. Plan activities that reduce stress and give children a chance to burn off some excess energy such as fingerpainting with shaving cream on a tabletop, blowing bubbles, or making angels in the snow to music.

Help children "celebrate" their own uniqueness and talents by recognizing all accomplishments such as learning to tie their shoe. Challenge them to use their talent to give to others less fortunate. (For example, tying up packages of food stuffs for the homeless.)

TODDLER TIME

A FEAST OF TODDLERS

by Jeannine Perez

Toddlers are wonderful little people who change daily. For them, everyday is a celebration of life and learning! They are eager to touch and taste the whole world, testing limits and manipulating adults without a trace of embarrassment.

Think of the toddler traits in your class when planning your program. Look at a toddler and you will see a curious learner, an explorer and inventor, a wanderer and wonderer, a bundle of energy that mimics and imitates (bad as well as good). Toddlers present a paradox of needs. They need both structure and predictability and enough adventure and a variety of new experiences for learning and growth.

We want our children to mature into life-long achievers. Is there a magical formula to make this happen? Perhaps not, but if I were to create a recipe for success with very young children, it would include at least the following ingredients.

★ A ROUNDED CUP OF ATTENTION ...

Celebrate each child! Look at your class as a group, then respond to each child as an individual, respecting differences in tempo, strengths, and needs.

★ ADD A DOLLOP OF FLEXIBILITY ...

Expect the unexpected! Because everything—from snow to school—is a first memory for young children. Enjoy their fresh perspective and unjaded observations. Often we learn when we listen.

★ THEN A PINCH OF DISCIPLINE ...

Toddlers feel more secure when they know their limits. We don't have many rules in our classroom, but they've all been explained and discussed. Our rules are simply to have respect for others and for ourselves. Because toddlers don't come prepared with a wealth of experiences that help them fear danger and understand the joys of sharing, we must help them learn social skills and safety. We learn that we don't say or do anything that will hurt others or ourselves.

★ BLEND IN A FEW CUPS OF SIMPLE ACTIVITIES ...

Activities can be planned or unplanned, but are always times to interact and learn by doing things together. We often capitalize on toddlers' unlimited curiosity by playing the "I wonder what would happen if..." game. Muse aloud, *"I wonder what would happen if you were as tall as the door." "What do you think would happen if dogs and cats could talk?"* Accept all answers, and encourage creative thinking.

Learning about cause and effect comes naturally when children can freely explore materials in their environment.

◆ Set out small pans of water and sponges and let children transport water across the playground with saturated sponges. Or, help them choose small rocks and make them shiny with soft brushes and water. Compare the wet rocks to dry ones.

◆ Mix 1/3 water and 2/3 baby oil in a bottle and tilt back and forth to watch the waves. Add blue coloring if you like. Be sure the bottle is not too big or heavy for little hands.

- Make shakers of all kinds. Coffee cans or margarine tubs with lids secured with tape can be used with supervision. (Be sure toddlers can't open containers and swallow the tiny objects inside. Plastic containers with screw-on lids are excellent.) Put beans, marbles, or tiny bells in the containers. Dried seed pods or measuring spoons on a ring can also be used as shakers. Shake simple rhythms. Compare the noises you can make.
- Change materials in your water table often, adding sand to sieve and pour, dried leaves to crunch, dirt to touch. We annually add bean and corn seeds to our "dirt table." It becomes a temporary garden. The toddlers plant, sprinkle with water, and pull out and finally replant seedlings to see daily changes as the seeds sprout. It's truly a hands-on project.
- Change items on your science table also, adding many touchable things. Leaves, feathers, rocks, moss, pictures of birds and animals, bark, and interesting twigs are fun to look at and touch.

★ STIR TOGETHER WITH ENERGY ...

Use music and movement for self-expression and easy transitions. Sing songs that celebrate diversity. Because every day is full of new learning experiences, we often create new verses to this song. We call it our "Bragging Song"!

This is what I can do, I can do, I can do,
This is what I can do,
And you can do it too!

(Sing or chant, and make up actions to demonstrate a new skill or movement. Children take turns singing and acting out the first two lines. The last line is imitated by everyone.)

★ TREAT WITH ADVENTURESOME SNACKS!

A simple snack is often the most exciting for young children, particularly because they learn while they participate. Try some of these easy snacks, and allow enough time for children to explore, make connections, and problem-solve. These simple activities also help children learn to accept new foods with different tastes.

- Learn to peel an orange, banana, or hard-boiled egg. (We cooked the eggs with a little food coloring in the water to make colorful shells.) Half an egg or an orange, is easier for small fingers to peel. Talk about what is seen, felt, smelled, and tasted.
- Play "What's Inside?". When preparing fresh fruit for snack, peel and cut open while children watch. Ask open-ended questions such as , *"What color do you think we will find inside?" "How many seeds do you think we will find inside?"* Sometimes I simply hold up a melon or other fruit and ask, *"What's inside?"* Answers may range from an elephant to an ice cream cone!
- Give children as many choices as they can handle. Start with limited choices. Offer several fruits or crackers for snack. Ask, *"Would you rather have round crackers or square ones?"* Give more choices during the day. *"Would you rather have a story before or after snack?"* Progress to choices about activities and materials, allowing children to choose materials, procedures, and titles for their art projects.

★ GARNISH WITH JOY ...

Because toddlers are unique and often unpredictable, we can either make life difficult for ourselves and them by trying to fit them into older molds before they are ready, or we can accept the natural maturational process, and learn and grow with them. We have a unique opportunity to view and experience life in new and fresh ways.

★ SHARE THE FUN ...

Toys in a center may be fun to explore, but games shared with adults and other children help toddlers make connections and add learning opportunities. Rolling a ball back an forth to a toddler changes a simple activity to a social interaction that encourages language and playfulness.

Toddlers celebrate every moment of life. If we try to rush them through the basic stages of development, we cheat them of the joy and magic they find in exploration and discovery. Celebrate with them.

PREVENTING THE HOLIDAY CRAZIES

by Karen Stephens

There are few things more delightful than celebrating fall and winter holidays with young children. But while celebrations hold lots of promise for joy, they sometimes deteriorate into crankiness, excessive crying, demanding pleas, and children's battles over toys and your attention. This all contributes to what I call the "holiday crazies."

WHAT CAUSES THE CRAZIES?

Families (and classrooms) experience a severe time crunch during holidays. Everyone rushes to make last minute preparations. Children can get lost in the shuffle.

Children are bombarded with noisy, overstimulating television, radio, and store advertising which can send them into a frenzy over holidays. Sometimes we fall into this trap by talking about a holiday weeks (months?) before it arrives. The drawn-out anticipation can become excruciating for children. It can be overwhelming to the point that children either act out with inappropriate behavior or withdraw into their own protective shell.

Sometimes we teachers contribute to the holiday crazies by planning and conducting developmentally inappropriate celebration activities. Some "art" activities are more regimented than our youngest children can enjoy or master. (Must everyone's turkey look the same?) Sometimes activities are too demanding. (Intricate snowflake patterns can be frustrating for children with newly developing fine motor skills and coordination.) Sometimes activities are biased and disrespectful. (For instance, sterotyping Native Americans by saying they all sit "Indian style," live in teepees, and do little more than run around yelling, "*Woooooo, wooooo.*")

It's a challenge to plan a classroom that doesn't contribute to the holiday crazies, but if you plan wisely, the goal can be achieved. I believe that we can plan celebrations that are not only magical and exciting, but also peaceful. I not only want to engender in children holiday delight, but also holiday peace and tranquility.

Following are ideas to get you started. I hope they help you and your children experience the joy of the coming holidays.

San Giorgio
SPAGHETTI

▲ **Don't start celebrating too far in advance.** In a five-day-a-week program, limiting holiday

activities to one week before the holiday arrives is more than enough time. Programs that only meet two or three days a week should limit activities to two weeks prior to the holiday.

▲ **Don't "over-plan."** You don't have to conduct every holiday activity you know of each and every year. Rotate activities yearly so they are fresh for you and the children.

▲ **Set priorities.** What is most important for children to learn? Let this be your guide as you select what holiday activities to do this year.

▲ **Remember to include activities that don't relate to the holiday.** This helps provide continuity and balance. Doing only holiday activities is overwhelming for everyone.

▲ **Keep to a regular routine as much as possible.** Limit the number of special visitors and field trips you take. Help children anticipate what will happen during a field trip or special visitor presentation.

▲ **Take it slow and breathe deeply.** It's easy to get carried away with a harried pace. Consciously think about slowing down so everyone doesn't get exhausted.

▲ **Alert children to upcoming changes in schedule.** If a vacation from school comes immediately before or after a holiday, inform children so they can have some understanding of their schedule.

▲ **Keep activities developmentally appropriate.** Remember to keep activities hands-on, and within children's skills and abilities.

▲ **Be respectful** of all people's celebration rituals and beliefs. Remember to include everyone; being overlooked doesn't promote self-esteem or a sense of joy.

▲ **Avoid duplicating holiday experiences** children will have with their parents. This especially relates to field trips. There are some holiday rituals that are so precious they should be reserved for family bonding rather than school activities.

▲ **Plan activities that encourage children to think of others.** Hopefully this will offset the risk of children developing an bad case of the "give-me's." Make gifts for others, contribute food to a homeless shelter, make toys for cats in the humane shelter.

▲ **Recruit extra hands and eyes.** Grandparents make great volunteers. They are often just waiting to be asked!

▲ **Plan specific relaxation activities.** Sensory play is soothing for children. Some suggestions are scented play dough and textured finger-painting. Creative movement and dramatic play let children use their imagination and gain a sense of control over their world.

▲ **Plan ahead to prevent minor frustrations.** Provide plenty of same-type toys so sharing can be accomplished more easily. When conducting activities, be sure to have materials gathered and set out ahead of time.

▲ **Keep in mind the true meaning of the celebration.** Focus on it rather than the commercialism and media-hype. Talk about gifts that can be given from the heart rather than the pocketbook.

▲ At least two weeks before the celebration, **send a newsletter home** to parents giving them tips on helping children cope with holiday excitement and stress. These should include reminders to keep children's meal and sleep routines as regular as possible. Encourage parents to plan specific occasions to spend "quality" time with their children so children aren't lost amidst the mad dash of buying food and gifts. It is also helpful to give parents tips on appropriate ways children can be involved in the planning and preparation for holidays.

THE GIVING PROJECT

by Sandra Gratias

The holidays are near, and for most, they will be a time of celebration and fun. However, the weeks leading up to a holiday can be stressful for preschoolers. Children are full of anticipation and focus on what they want and expect to get. Their schedules are disrupted by shopping and parties. As a result, they can get cranky and edgy. One way to deal with this tension is to shift the focus from themselves to others and give children something constructive to do during the long weeks of waiting. Our school helps families accomplish this by preparing a Giving Project.

At the beginning of December each class gets the name of a needy child the same age as our children. Names can come from "giving trees" at department stores or malls, from churches, or from local social service agencies. Each teacher decorates a coffee can with holiday stickers, ribbons, and wrapping. A letter goes home asking the parents to find jobs for their children to do to earn money (usually quarters) to give toward buying gifts for the selected child. Children are always eager to help! For three weeks, they work at jobs such as dusting, vacuuming, setting and clearing the dishes, cleaning their room, folding towels, wrapping presents, decorating the house, and sealing and stamping holiday cards. They deposit their money in the Giving Can which gets heavier and heavier!

We introduce children to the idea of how sad it would be not to get gifts by reading *The Biggest Most Beautiful Christmas Tree* by Amye Rosenberg (Western Publishing Co.). We also read books about giving such as *Bialosky's Christmas* by Leslie McGuire, (Western Publishing Co.) and *Little Lost Angel* by Janet Field Heath (Rand McNally). Traditional stories about Jesus and the shepherds and Wise Men, the songs "The Friendly Beasts" and "The Little Drummer Boy," and the Russian folktale about the spider's gift of silk diapers fit the theme too.

Children can also spend time making wrapping paper. There are several ways to do this. One way is to crumple newspaper, dip it into paint, and then splotch it onto sheets of easel paper. Another method is to dip cookie cutters into paint and print them onto the paper. Still another popular method is to dip toy car wheels into paint and drive them around the paper.

Finally it is shopping day! First we go over rules such as staying together and what to do if lost in a store. Children come up with a list of possible gifts. Then we get plenty of chaperones and head for a local department store! We spend equal amounts of money on clothes and toys and take children to the

clothing department first. Once there, the adults look for fun things like sweatsuits and pajamas with popular characters on them. We let children choose a few outfits they really like.

Then we vote. We do this by having two adults hold the two possible purchases at different parts of the aisle and letting children stand next to their favorite. The item with the most children wins. Hats, mittens, hair bows, belts, and socks round out our selections. We do the same sort of voting for one or two larger toys and then add story books, stuffed animals, puppets, coloring books, and crayons as we have money. Back at school, we enjoy a snack and wrap the gifts. The teachers deliver the gifts to the agency or recipient.

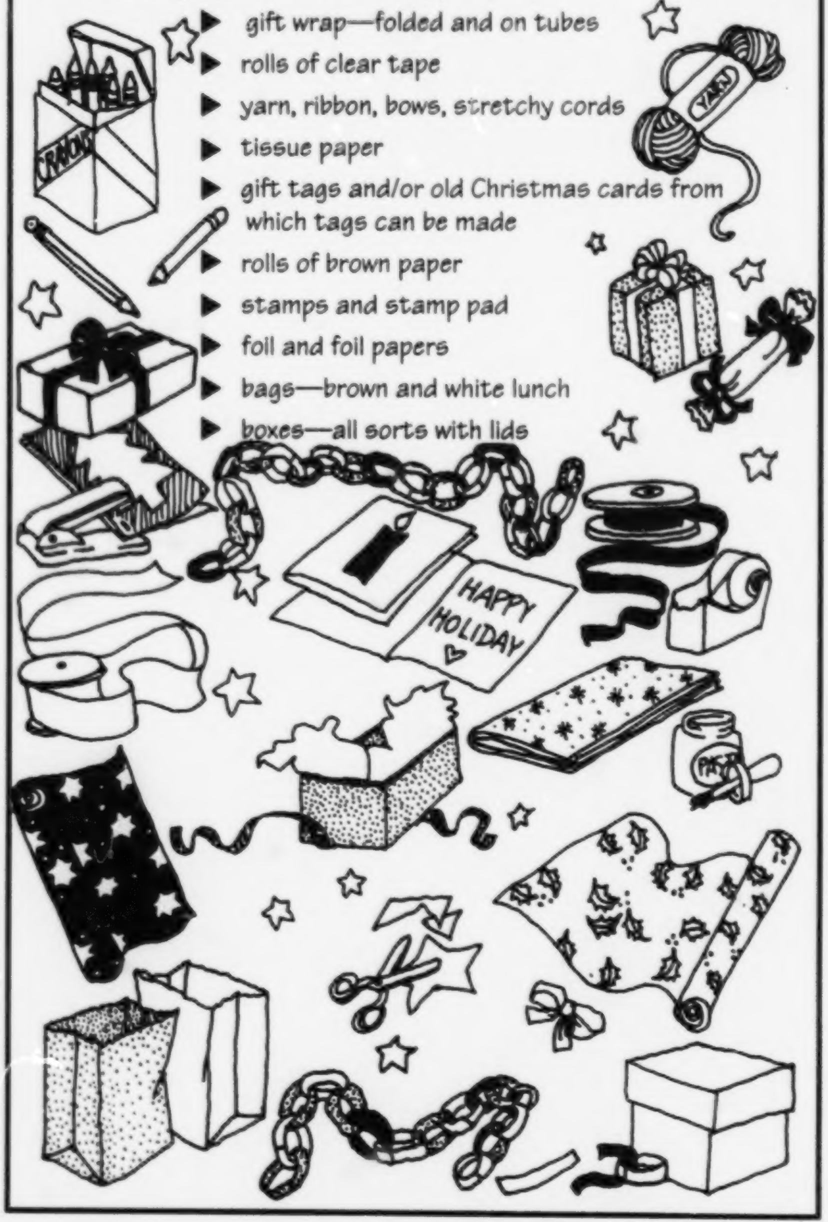
The parents at our school have often told us how much they enjoy this project. It can be done by a school, one class, a group of neighbors, or even just one family. It focuses children on the true meaning of the holidays and gives them some quality time with their families. Keeping the focus off of 'getting' and onto 'giving' lessens the tension. It bolsters children's self-esteem and adds to the joy of the season. Teaching our children to care is one of the best gifts we can give them!

GIFT-WRAPPING CENTER

With a few boxes, bags, and gift wraps, you can please a host of children. There is something children love about wrapping gifts. It might be their love of tape!

For whatever reason, gift wrapping is BIG with little ones. This center is truly a process center. Children can wrap, unwrap, and rewrap all day. Here are some things to include in it. (Be sure to ask parents for these scrap items.)

- gift wrap—folded and on tubes
- rolls of clear tape
- yarn, ribbon, bows, stretchy cords
- tissue paper
- gift tags and/or old Christmas cards from which tags can be made
- rolls of brown paper
- stamps and stamp pad
- foil and foil papers
- bags—brown and white lunch
- boxes—all sorts with lids



HOLIDAY FOR ANIMALS

by Susan Entz

The North Wind
-traditional rhyme

The north wind doth blow,
And we shall have snow,
And what will poor robin
do then?
Poor thing!

He'll sit in the barn,
And keep himself warm,
And hide his head under
his wing.
Poor thing!

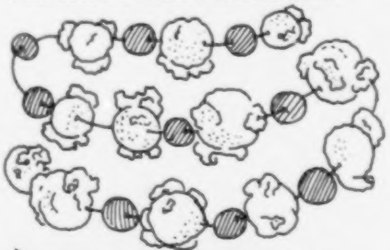
Focus on the holiday spirit of giving by planning a holiday for animals. Putting out food for winter animals is a centuries' old tradition.

Recite The North Wind and talk about the wintertime challenges faced by animals that do not hibernate. Propose giving a holiday party for neighboring wildlife. Decorate an evergreen with bird treats and scatter food for small animals.

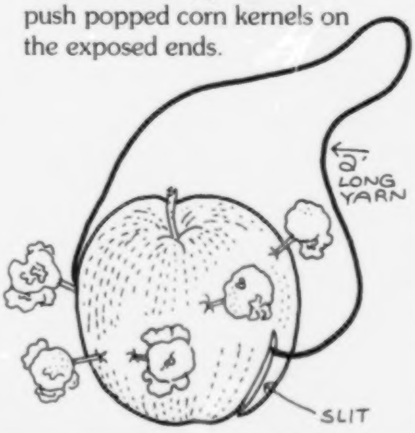
Guest List— Take an Winter Nature Walk Plan for the party by taking a nature walk to identify the different types of animals who are spending the winter in your neighborhood. Look for birds and other animals and search for their tracks. Once you know what kinds of animals are around, you can decide on the menu.

Adopt-a-Tree On the walk, locate a short evergreen that can be the focus for your decorations and celebration.

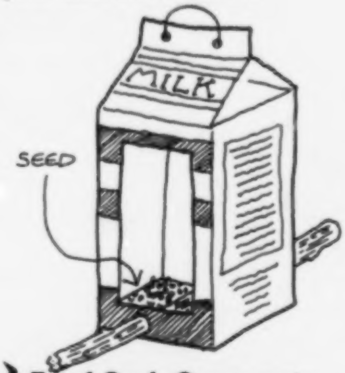
Popcorn and Cranberry Strings A simple, but effective, way to feed birds and decorate the tree at the same time is to string popcorn on long strands, draping them decoratively on the tree. Add the beautiful, rich red color of fresh cranberries.



Apple Ornaments Make a slit into an apple to about the mid-point; remove the knife carefully. Slip a piece of two-foot long yarn into the slit and tie into a secured knot at the tip. Let children stick toothpicks deep into the apple and then push popped corn kernels on the exposed ends.

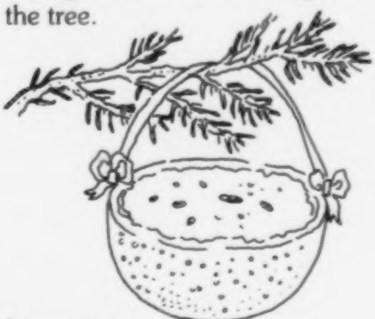


Milk Carton Bird Feeder Transform a used milk carton into a terrific bird feeder by cutting an opening into two sides. Poke a hole beneath the opening and insert a stick to form a "perch." Punch two holes in the top of the carton and tie off the end of a two-foot string in each hole. Fill the bottom of the carton with birdseed and hang outside for your feathered friends.

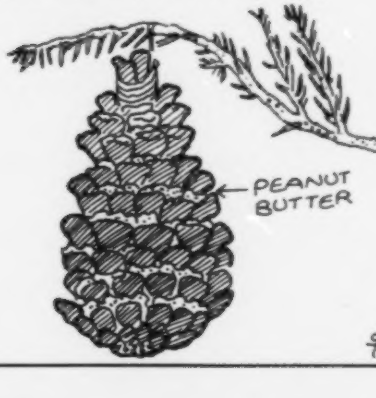


Food Sock Ornaments Place two plastic mesh bags in which onions or turkeys are packaged, one inside the other. Pour peanuts into the bottom section and tie into a ball with string. Pour cereal onto the center section, tying off the ball and then press the end through a hole in the top of a cottage cheese container; make a knot on the top side of the lid. Insert two holes for a hanger. Other possible fills include finch mix, wheat, millet, and parrot mix.

➔ **Orange Rind Suet Clusters** Cut an orange in half and scoop out the orange. Poke holes in opposite sides of the orange. Melt suet and pour into the orange halves. When suet hardens, tie a green ribbon through each hole and hang on the tree.

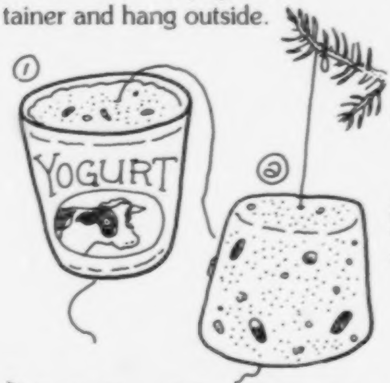


➔ **Pine Cone Feeders** A messy, but fun, way to create simple bird feeders is to press peanut butter between the bract of the pine cone and then to sprinkle it with birdseed. Wind a red piece of yarn around the pine cone top and hang on the tree. (Birds can use the yarn to build their nests in the spring!)

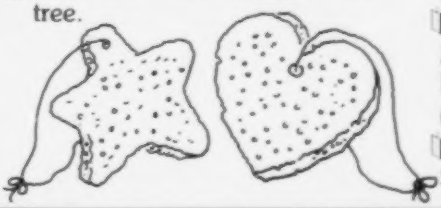


➔ **Suet Bell** Melt suet (available at the meat market) or a block of lard and stir in bird seed, pieces of dried fruit, and sunflower seeds. Mix well and cool slightly. Poke a hole in the bottom of a plastic yogurt container and insert a string. Hang the end of the string over the edge.

Pour the suet mixture into the container. When the fat hardens, remove the yogurt container and hang outside.



➔ **Stale Bread Cut-Outs** Ask parents to send in slices of stale bread for this project. Demonstrate how to insert holiday cookie cutters into the bread to cut out designs. Thread yarn through a small hole cut in the top of the bread. Hang on the tree.



➔ **Scatter Nuts and Seeds** Some birds prefer to feed on the ground. Scatter birdseed around the base of the tree. Provide a variety of nuts for squirrels or other small wildlife.

➔ **Water** Periodically break ice on a water dish for the neighborhood wildlife.

➔ **Related Books**

- *Christmas in the Woods* by Francis Mary Frost (Harper & Row)
- *The Birds' Christmas Tree* by Emma Lillian (Knopf)
- *The Animals' Christmas* by Catherine Gardam (Mike McElderry Books)
- *Invite a Bird to Dinner: Bird Feeders You Can Make* by Beverly Courtney Crook (Lothrop, Lee and Shepard)
- *The Cobweb Christmas* by Shirley Climo (Harper & Row)

ORNAMENTS FROM NATURE

by Tania K. Cowling

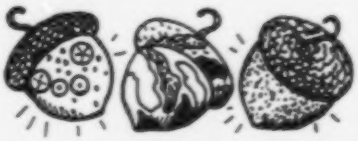
Depending on where you live in the country, seasonal changes bring an abundance of materials from nature. These items can be transformed into holiday ornaments, both traditional and unique in design. Decorating from nature can be rewarding starting from the collection of the objects to the finished artistic creation. Below are a few ideas to try.

PINE CONE EVERGREEN

Give each child a pine cone, making sure the bottom stem is removed for it to stand securely. Submerge the cone in water and after removing it, sprinkle evenly with grass seed. Place the pine cone in a shallow container containing at least half an inch of water. Place it in a sunny location, keeping water in the base. As the greens grow, trim them to emphasize an evergreen shape.

ACORN DECORATIONS

Make a tree decoration by painting acorns with tempera paint. Sprinkle these with glitter, sequins, tinsel, etc. Screw in a cup hook at the top for a permanent hanger.

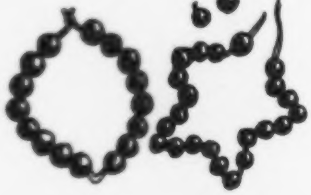


UNDER THE SEA

Sea shells can be turned into glamorous holiday ornaments. Children can paint them with tempera paints or leave them as is. Most shells have a natural hole to thread colorful yarn through or you can glue on a hanger with hot glue. If you're lucky to find sand dollars or starfish, these can be very impressive!

BERRY ORNAMENTS

Collect non-poisonous berries from trees and bushes or purchase cranberries at your market. Mold floral wire into a shape. String the berries on the wire, closing the top to form a hanger. Hang these on a holiday tree.



LEAF HOLLY ORNAMENTS

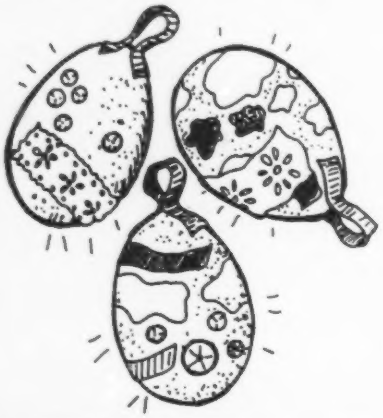
Collect an amount of small green leaves. Cut out a circle of cardboard. Glue on the leaves, point to point, resembling a holly sprig. Cut out small circles of red construction paper and glue on these imitation holly berries. Hang these ornaments around the room or on a tree.

SEED ORNAMENT

Buy or collect squash seeds, sunflower seeds, birdseed, etc. Cut an ornament shape from cardboard. Poke a hole at the top for the hanger. Spread a thin line of white glue along the bottom. Lay the first row of seeds on the ornament. This will dry quickly and then you're ready for the second row. Continue varying the rows of seeds until completely covered.

EGGSHELL ORNAMENTS

Poke a hole in the top and bottom of an egg. Blow gently through one hole so the egg comes out the other end. (Use eggs for holiday recipes.) Rinse the inside shell with water and let it dry. Paint the egg shell, creating unique designs. Decorate the egg with glitter, sequins, lace, etc. Glue on a loop of ribbon to dry as your hanger.



CELEBRATE WITH SONG

by Margery A. Kranyik

Sing with me,
I'll sing with you
and so we will sing
together...
Let's celebrate in song!

Every culture and ethnic group has music deeply rooted in their traditions. The value of a song cannot be disputed as you look at the eager faces of young children when they sing their favorite tunes.

♪ Songs should be a part of every day in child care. Nursery songs sung with infants and toddlers emphasize rhymes and rhythms. Exaggerate nonsense words and phrases as you sing to promote humor. Make eye contact to let children know that you value **them** and the singing experience. Celebrate their daily routine by singing as you perform infant/toddler tasks. *"This is the way we have our lunch, have our lunch, have our lunch. This is the way we have our lunch everyday together."* Make up other songs for the events of the day together.

♪ Celebrate literacy. Many children's songs appear in story book form—"Old MacDonald Had a Farm," "The Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly," "Down by the Bay," "Shake My Sillies Out." Help children begin to make a connection between songs and print. Your local bookstore and children's library will help you find an appropriate selection of song stories.

♪ Celebrating a special event, holiday, or season? Check out the variety of songs with familiar tunes and new words in the Piggyback collection from Warren Publishing House: *Piggyback Songs, More Piggyback Songs, Piggyback Songs for Infants and Toddlers,* to name a few. If nothing suits your needs, write your own song! The familiar rhythm pattern of a tune will help you with new and appropriate words. Let your children help. For example, the old favorite "We Wish You a Merry Christmas" can be adapted to "We Wish You a Happy Birthday," "We Wish You a Happy Springtime," or "We Wish You a Fun Vacation."

♪ Celebrate self-esteem. There are many "name" songs and songs that stimulate imagination. Try this favorite name song to the tune of "Where is Thumbkin?"

Where is _________, Where is _________ (teacher),
Here I am. Here I am (child).
How are you today Sir/Ma'am? (teacher),
Very well, I thank you (child),
Glad you're here, Glad you're here (teacher).

♪ Try chanting "*This is what Child's name can do, everybody do it too.*" One child thinks of a motion for all to follow. Encourage others to think of a motion.

♪ Have a songbook celebration. Make a collection of the words to children's favorite songs on chart paper. Keep the "book" in your music or reading center so children can sing on their own alone or with friends during their free time. Take time to sing with them to observe what children know about letters, words, and other symbols. Send song words home in your newsletter so parents and children can sing together. Ask parents to come to class and teach a favorite children's song from another culture to add (phonetically, if necessary!) to your songbook.

♪ Add rhythm instruments to accompany your songs. Have a parade indoors and out. Invite other children and adult friends to join their celebration.

CELEBRATE DIVERSITY

by Sherry Burrell

Very often, when something or someone is a bit "odd, different, or unusual," people are a little scared or at least cautious. It's human nature to be careful around the unfamiliar; it's a protective instinct. But curiosity is also part of human nature! We need it in order to learn. When we help children to combine this natural curiosity with their natural caution, we are teaching them to safely become more comfortable around new things. We are teaching them to value the differences around them. We are teaching them to celebrate diversity.

SOLICIT PARENT SUPPORT

Teaching children that "odd, different or unusual" things and people can be interesting and exciting requires parental support. Be sure that parents understand the philosophy that you are promoting. Encourage parents to discuss what they would like their children to learn. Help them honor their children's natural caution and curiosity, and start an open discussion of ways to promote their children's growth in this area. Once parents are supportive of your overall objectives, get them involved in helping to plan and carry out activities and to provide materials and resources.

START WITH UNUSUAL THINGS

Introduce your diversity program by focusing on THINGS that are odd, unusual, or different. Children often call these things "weird" or "awesome"! There are some excellent picture books and videos available that show "weird," wild animals in nature. There are insects that look like sticks, spiders that look like they have fur, reptiles whose skin changes color, and plants that trap and eat insects. Become a collector of "awesome pictures." (Parents can help with this.) There are all kinds of weird-looking machines, vehicles, and robots in our world today. When children learn about "weird' things in the two-dimensional world first, there is less need for caution and more emphasis on curiosity.

BE CURIOUS

Show children that you are interested and excited about what **you** can learn by becoming more familiar with new things. *"What could this be?" "I wonder where it lives?" "What does it look like when it moves?"* Ask questions, and children will learn to ask questions. Look up answers, and children will learn that there are resources available to help them to find answers too!

BRING IN "FASCINATING FACT" ITEMS

Fill your classroom with fascinating objects! Turn "show and tell" into an opportunity for children and parents to scavenge around their homes looking for items that no one else might recognize. Parents can search tool boxes, kitchen drawers, and junk shelves to find things that children will find fascinating. When these fascinating items arrive, model an attitude of interest and excitement, help children ask questions, encourage them to imagine and invent possible uses. Invite the child who brought in the item to tell a "fascinating fact" about it. A few items that have stumped my children include a staple remover, a melon ball scooper, a garlic press, a fabric softener basket, and a letter opener.

PLAN FOR DIVERSITY IN PEOPLE

When it comes to teaching children that people are just as diverse as animals, plants, and objects around their homes, some pre-planning will make the message come across "loud and clear." Not every classroom is a microcosm of the larger world, so it is not always possible to start with the children themselves. But if this is possible, draw on children's families to help provide as many different experiences as possible. If not, use what you do have, and look to your wider community for more resources.

Plan to have as many different people visit your classroom as you can fit into your year! Be careful NOT to have a person visit just to be an example of "a person who is ...(Chinese, tall, cerebral palsied, etc.)." This approach would only emphasize the differences. Instead, have people come to share something of themselves with children. They can tell a story, show an interesting picture, bring in an interesting item, demonstrate a specific craft or talent, share an unusual food item, teach a simple song, or teach children a greeting in a foreign language.

Try to get a range of people who "look" different from each other. People come in many sizes, shapes, and colors. Their facial features, body types, and hairstyles vary. They speak many languages, wear interesting types of clothing and accessories on their bodies. They have different capabilities and have their own traditions and beliefs. When your goal is to arrange for many different types of people to share something of who they are with children, then your children will learn to value all people.

HONOR CHILDREN'S CAUTION

Honor the child's right to be cautious. It is right and natural for a child to be careful around anyone he does not know. If a child feels he wants to hang back, stay with a trusted adult, or "just watch" from afar, that should be respected. Children in our world today are taught to be careful around strangers. Of course, this is an important message, and teachers work hard to insure that children never talk to or approach strangers.

But too often the message gets confused, and children think that "strangers" means "strange" people. To a child, a stranger might be someone "weird", "odd," or "unusual," rather than anyone a child does not know through a trusted adult. We need to teach our children to be cautious of ALL people they don't know, no matter what those people LOOK like. The message should be that both friends and enemies of the world can have many different faces.

In school, we can teach children to talk with their parents about each visitor who comes to the classroom. Parents can support their child's interest in the new person, can help the child to understand that looking different or speaking a different language doesn't indicate anything about what kind of a person she is, and parents can remind their children about rules about strangers.

DIVERSITY IS THE GOAL

Teachers have the opportunity to turn their classrooms into places in which diversity is the goal. When teachers model enthusiasm, interest, and excitement about anything "weird," "unusual," or "different" AND celebrate it as an opportunity to learn something new, children do too!

218

LET'S CELEBRATE!

A Magnetic Story by Gail P. Jones

Directions for making the magnetic story:

1. Photocopy the pictures needed for the story. You also may wish to enlarge the pictures. Photocopy the words.
2. Color the pictures making sure people match in repeated pictures.
3. Laminate or cover with contact paper.
4. Cut out the pictures on the dotted lines.
5. Put small pieces of adhesive magnetic tape on the backs of each picture sufficient to hold it securely on a magnetic surface.
6. Put the pictures in numerical order and use a cookie sheet or magnetic surface to tell the story.

Put up picture #1 on the upper lefthand corner of the magnetic surface. The children in Ms. Smith's class were getting more and more excited as the days came closer to the holiday vacation! Ms. Smith noticed that they were not listening as well as they had been. She noticed they seemed restless and needed something to keep them busy! So, one day she sat the children down in front of her and made an announcement.

Ms. Smith said, *"Boys and girls, please turn on your listening ears. I know you will want to hear what I have to tell you. Since the holidays are coming and you are so excited, I want you to plan a holiday party for the last day of school before vacation.....the 22nd of December. And,"* Mrs. Smith continued, *"I want each of you to plan a special surprise for the party!"*

The boys and girls cheered and then they began to look at each other somewhat puzzled. Then they all started talking at once. **Put up picture #2 next to # 1.** Linda, a little girl with pigtails, raised her hand.

Ms. Smith said, *"Linda has her hand raised. Let's listen to her."*

The class listened as Linda asked, *"I don't know how to plan a party. What should I do?"*

Ms. Smith said, *"Just think of it as giving a gift to the rest of your friends. Think of what the holiday means to you and plan something you can share and give to the rest of the class."*

Linda said, *"Oh, I know what I can do! I can...."*

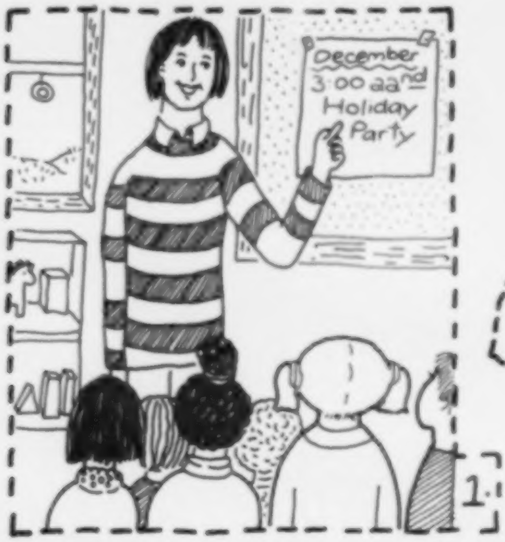
Ms. Smith stopped her before she said another word. *"Shh...don't tell us now. Remember it's a* ***surprise!"***

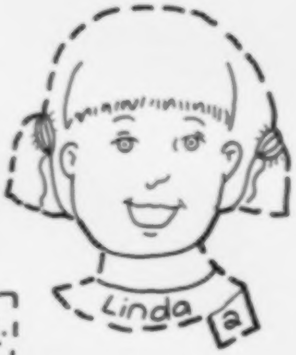
The children couldn't wait to go home that day and plan the things they each could bring to the party.

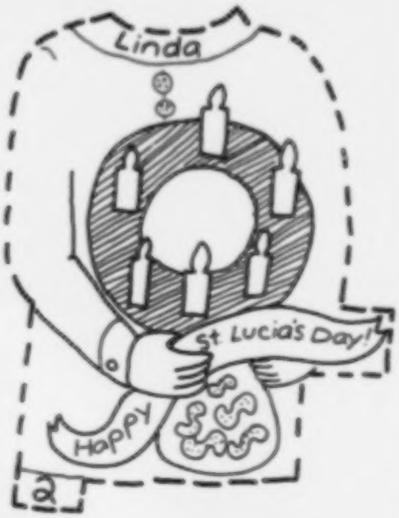
Put up picture #3 under Linda's head. Linda decided to make a ribbon with glitter that said, "Happy St. Lucia's Day," the holiday her Swedish family celebrated every December. She asked her mother to help her make the special St. Lucia buns that are shaped liked S's. And, she worked for days making a special crown of leaves and paper candles like the one worn on the morning of St. Lucia's Day by the oldest daughter in the house. They would have fun taking turns wearing it.

Put up picture #4. Linda's best friend, Brenda, is African-American. **Put # 5 under Brenda's head.** She decided to bring some things her family used to celebrate Kwanzaa. She made a kinara. That's a candleholder for the seven candles that represent the seven principles of Kwanzaa. She decided she would tell her friends about the seven principles and how they could all practice them in class. She also planned to bring some fruit for refreshments.

Put up picture #6. Matt couldn't decide what to bring for the party. So his mother gave him a small Christmas tree that she had stored away. **Put up picture # 7.** Matt decorated the tree with a ball for each member of the class on it. He cut them out himself and printed each name very carefully. Then he made a very special star like the one that shown on Christmas Eve many years ago. He asked his mom if he could use the money in his piggy bank to buy a box of candy canes. She thought that was a wonderful idea!







Put up picture # 8. Joe is Mexican and knew right away what he could bring to the party! A piñata! **Put #9 under Joe's head.** He worked for days with newspaper and glue making a paper mache donkey. He decorated the last layer with crepe paper and made small surprises for each of his friends to put inside. He couldn't wait to show them how to play the game!

Put up picture #10. Cheryl was really undecided as to what to do about the party plan. She asked her older sister for some ideas. Her sister said, "*Why don't you show them how to have a Chinese New Year Party?*" Cheryl thought that would be fun! **Put picture #11 under Cheryl's head.** She gathered up all the things they would need to make a dragon. She took glue, paint, paper and her own book called, *How to Make A Dragon*. She knew they would have lots of fun getting under the dragon and running around together! Her sister helped her make some fortune cookies for a special treat with a surprise inside!

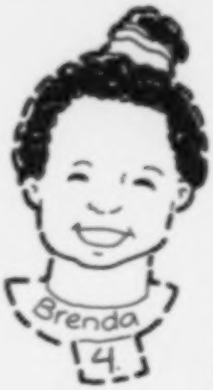
Put up picture #12. Richard couldn't wait to get home and tell his mother about his party plans! He asked if he could borrow the family's Hanukkah menorah to trace around and make one for the party. She said, *"Of course!"* **Put #13 under Richard's head.** Then he added eight candles and one in the middle for the *shamash*. That's the candle used to light the others. He would tell the story of Hanukkah and serve *latkes*, which are potato pancakes, with applesauce. He also made a *dreidel* out of a milk carton and thought how much fun it would to play and sing the dreidel game with all of his friends!

Put up picture #14. Ms. Smith thought about what each child might bring. She knew that each of them would probably bring something for each of the holidays their families celebrated. Do you remember what holidays they were? (Point to each picture and help children recall each.) Ms. Smith didn't want to copy any of their ideas. She needed to think of one of her own. She thought and thought. Nothing! Oh, dear! Now she had a problem! She sat by the window watching the snow fall gently on the windowpane. Then it happened! Just like magic an idea popped into her head! Out loud she said, *"Why it's right under my nose!"* She meant the snowflakes outside the window. *"I'll celebrate the beginning of winter!"*

Put #15 under Ms. Smith's head. She made a very special cake and wrote *"Welcome Winter"* in icing on top. Then she made a snowman game the children could play matching different sized snowballs. And, Ms. Smith planned to teach them all the winter songs she knew!

Put up picture #16. December 22nd came and all the children and Ms. Smith brought their surprises to school. They made a huge sign that said *"HAPPY HOLIDAYS"* and had the best party! It lasted all day long!

Ms. Smith thanked each child for her wonderful gift that made the party so special! Do you know what each child gave for the party? (Discuss the talents of each child in the story and let your children discover that they too have special talents to give to their friends and family!)


Brenda
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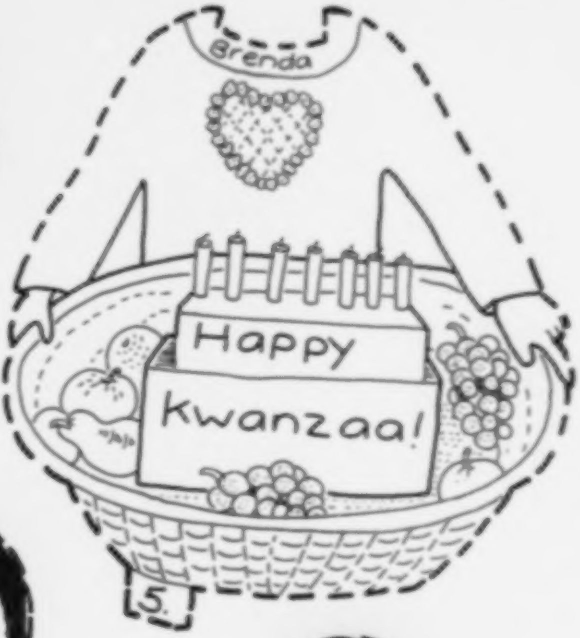
Brenda
Happy
Kwanzaa!
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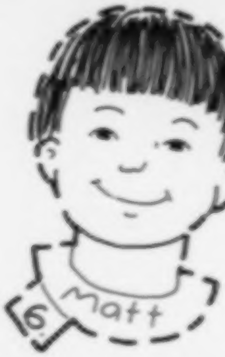
Matt
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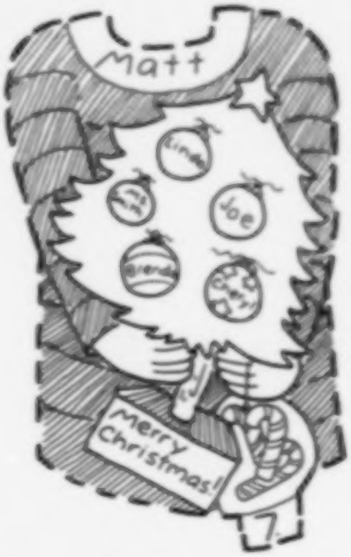
Matt
Linda
Joe
Brenda
Cheryl
Merry Christmas!
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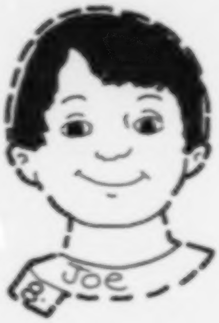
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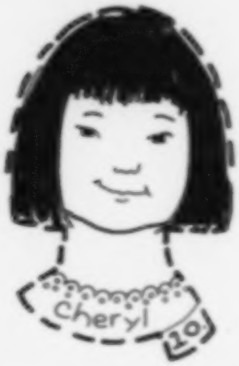
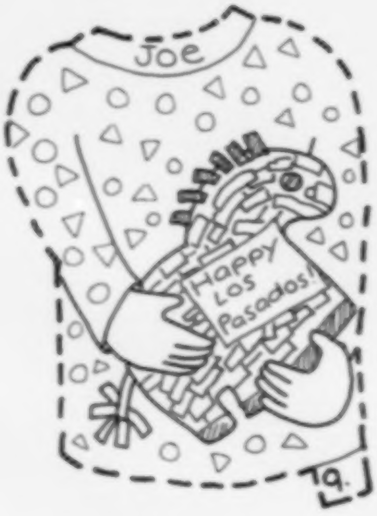
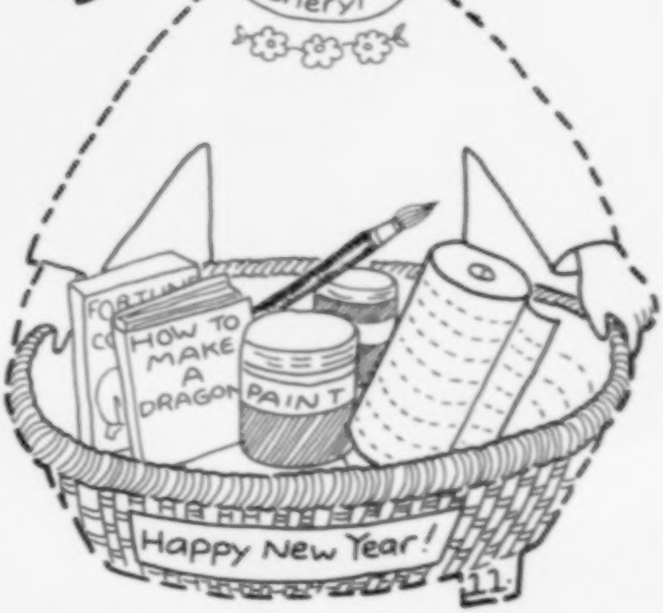
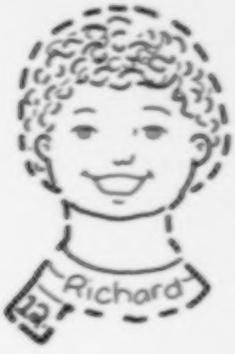

Cheryl
10.


Joe
Happy Los Pasados!
9.


Cheryl
FORTUNE CO
HOW TO MAKE A DRAGON
PAINT
Happy New Year!
11.



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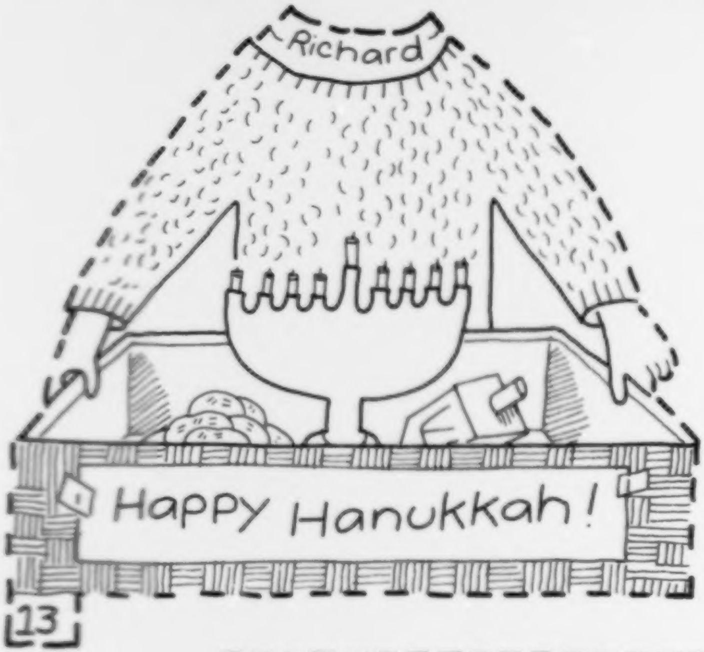
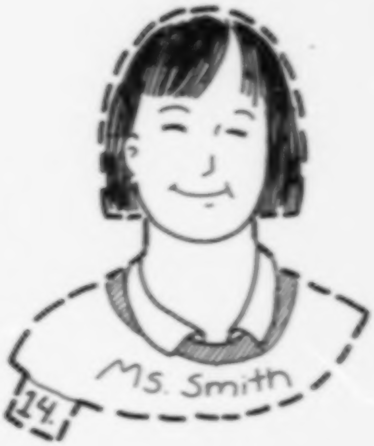

Richard
Happy Hanukkah!

13



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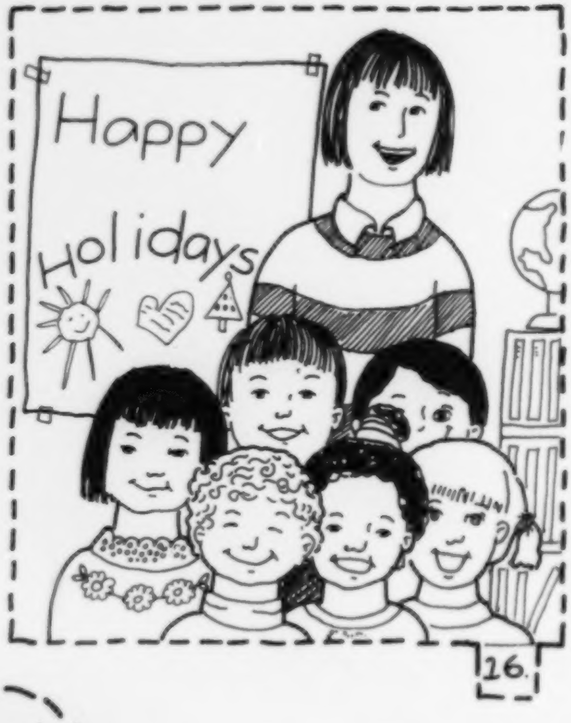
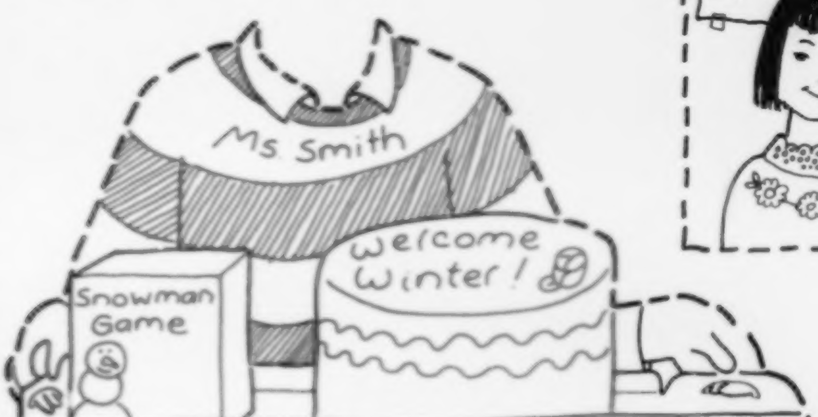

Happy Holidays

16


Ms. Smith
Welcome Winter!
Snowman Game

15

Perhaps your children could make some of the ideas each of the children in the story made. Let them think of other things the children might have made for the party.

CELEBRATE AROUND THE WORLD

by Barbara Fischer

Pack your bags, pick up your passports and let's go traveling! One way young children can learn about and appreciate different cultures is through celebrations. This holiday season, spend the month of December discovering the different ways the season is observed through literature, art, dramatic play and cooking.

YOUR ITINERARY

Begin the first week in December with a trip to Poland to join in a *Szopka* Puppet Show. Then it's off to Sweden in time to celebrate the Feast of Santa Lucia. The third week head south and travel to warm Mexico to join children in the *Los Posados* parade. Arrive back at school in time for your own holiday fun.

LET'S BEGIN

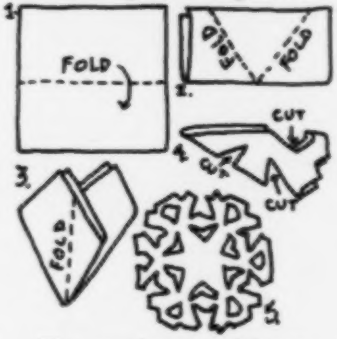
Gather children together to discuss their holiday adventures. Point out the countries they will visit on a globe or world map. Let each child draw their picture on their own passport (a folded index card) and decorate it. Let them place a sticker on their passport as each country is visited. Before you begin your journey, find a place for your own Christmas tree. It will be almost decorated by the time you return.

IT'S TIME TO GO— TO POLAND

Let's join the children in Poland for a traditional *Szopka* Play. A Szopka is a portable puppet theater used to portray a Nativity play. Polish children enjoy making their own *Szopka* to present the story of *The Christmas Spider* by Loretta Holz (Philomel Books). This is a delightful story of a spider that believes he is ugly. He decides to hide in a stable to be near two animals, a rooster and a donkey that might not care about his appearance. One cold night, a man and woman come to the stable with a baby crying from the cold. Rooster offers his feathers for warmth, but is told he must keep warm himself. Spider then weaves a web to cover and warm the baby. The woman thanks him and tells him that from now on people will be glad to see him.

After hearing the story, children can make and decorate their own *Szopka* from a cardboard box. The book has detailed instructions including the short play. All the characters are stick puppets. The spider is a foam ball painted black with pipe cleaner legs. Present the puppet show at the end of the week.

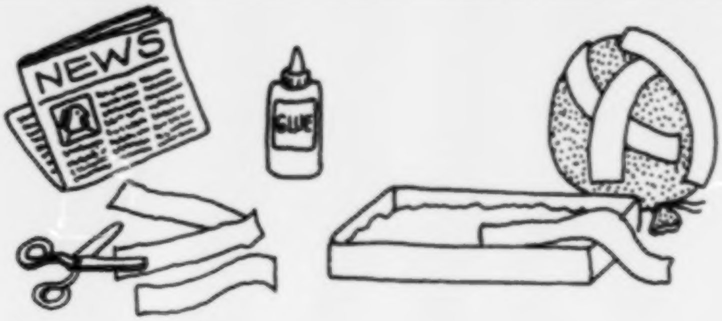
Paper cutting is another traditional activity for Polish children. Make ornaments by cutting white paper snowflakes. Place a same size colored piece of paper between two snowflakes and glue all together.

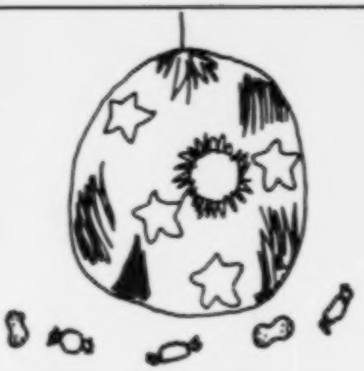


Then end your celebration with a snack of poppyseed noodles. Be sure to hang the ornaments on your tree as a reminder of your trip.

NEXT STOP: SWEDEN

Come join children in Sweden as they celebrate the Feast of Santa Lucia on December 13th, one of the shortest days of the year. Traditionally, the eldest daughter wears a wreath of lighted candles on her head as she passes out snacks to family members. She does this to bring light on this short day. Let all the children become Santa Lucia by wearing headbands with candles cut from yellow or white construction paper. Staple the candles to the headband and add green paper leaves for decoration.



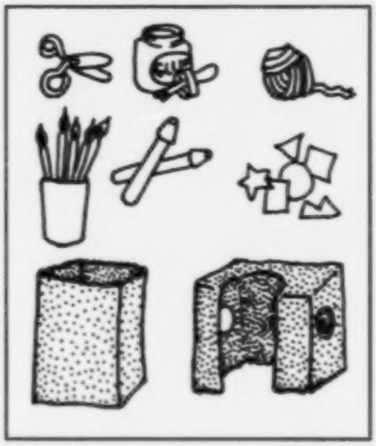


During the week, read *Christmas in Noisy Village* by Astrid Lindgren and Ilon Wikland (Viking). Spend time talking about this family and their activities. If there is snow in your area, you might try to make snow lanterns and snow angels as the children do in the book. During quiet times, find a dark corner and light a candle. Let children see how much light one candle can make and how important light is to our lives. Be sure to discuss safety when candles are lit.

Invite children to cut paper candles following the same pattern as for the headbands, but this time, use tagboard. Add flames and punch a 3/4" hole in the base of each candle. Pull the small branches of your Christmas tree through the hole to make the candle stand upright. These candles will remind you of your visit to Sweden. Let children wear their Santa Lucia headbands during the celebration. Make gingersnap cookies from a prepared mix or traditional recipe. Cut the cookies into shapes and bake. Children can offer cookies to each other for snack.

YOUR LAST STOP: MEXICO

Leave the cold weather behind and travel to warm Mexico to join children in the celebration of *Los Posados*. Read *Pedro, The Angel of Olvera Street* by Leo Politi (Scribner's). As you read the book, children will notice that these children celebrate Christmas where it is warm in contrast to the two previous countries visited. Make preparations for the *Los Pasados* parade by having children decorate jackets made from brown paper bags. These can be painted and decorated with paper shapes.



Make a papier-mache piñata to hang in your classroom. Construct the piñata by placing layers of paper dipped in diluted glue (half glue and half water) and spread over a blown-up balloon. When dry, pop the balloon and paint the piñata with bright colors.

Fill your piñata with wrapped candy or fruit and hang it from the ceiling. The children will wear their jackets and carry paper streamers as they participate in the *Los Pasados* parade. This parade recalls the Holy Family's journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem to search for lodging. The children might stop at designated places to ask for a place to spend the night. They are turned away at each stop. When they return to their classroom, the teacher can invite the children to stay there. Now is the time to give each child a chance to break the piñata with a plastic bat. End your celebration with a snack of nachos. Prepare this snack by spreading corn chips on a baking sheet, sprinkling grated cheese over them and baking in a 250° F. oven for about eight minutes. Enjoy! Make paper chains in a variety of colors to hang on your tree as a reminder of the good time spent in Mexico.

When your trip comes to an end, ask children which activity they enjoyed the most. You might write their responses in the passports and give these to children to take home. Now have fun participating in your own traditional Christmas fun. Remember to make favorite decorations to add to your tree. Your multicultural holiday tree is now complete—a reminder of your holiday adventure.

ISRAELI HANUKKAH

by Susan G. Mills

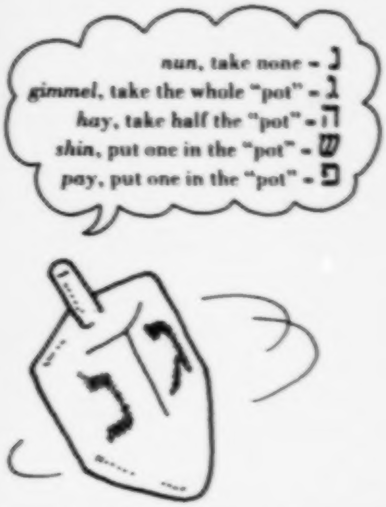
The celebration of Hanukkah varies from country to country. Hanukkah is a minor holiday in the Jewish religion. In Israel, it is celebrated differently from the way we celebrate it in the United States. Giving to charity is an important part of Hanukkah in Israel. Sharing what we have with others who are less fortunate is done by giving money to charities, inviting people into the home, and by donating food.

The first night of Hanukkah, December 17th, is party time in Israel. The party marks the beginning of vacation for Israeli children. Schools are closed for all eight days of Hanukkah. The candles in the menorah are lit, songs are sung, and children play with the dreidel, or *s'vivon*. The story of Hanukkah is told with drama. Everyone gets a part in the Hanukkah play!

Jelly-filled doughnuts, called *sufganiyot* (suf-ga-nee-oat), are served to remember the oil that burned in the Holy Temple for eight days in Israel. Potato pancakes called *latkes* are not as popular. An Arabic treat, a doughnut with a caramel sauce, is sometimes served.

The *dreidel* is a little different in Israel. It has the Hebrew letters *nun, gimmel, hay, pay*, for *"Nes gadol haya po"* meaning "A great miracle happened here." In the United States dreidels have the Hebrew letters *nun, gimmel, hay, shin*, for *"Nes gadol haya sham"* meaning "A great miracle happened there."

The dreidel game is played using nuts or chocolate coins called *gelt* for playing pieces. Everyone puts one piece into the "pot." Each time the "pot" is won, everyone puts one in again. A player spins the dreidel, and does the following for each letter. Nun—take none, gimmel—take the whole "pot," hay—take half of the "pot," and shin—put one in the "pot." The player with the most pieces at the end of the game is the winner.

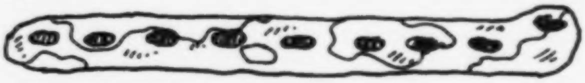

nun, take none - נ
gimmel, take the whole "pot" - ג
hay, take half the "pot" - ה
shin, put one in the "pot" - ש
pay, put one in the "pot" - פ

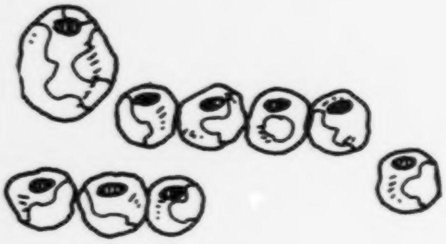
A Hanukkah Party

You can have a Hanukkah party in your classroom this year. Decorate the classroom with blue and white paper chains for the Israeli flag. Children can make menorahs out of paper or modeling clay, make sufganiyot, tell the Hanukkah story, sing songs and play dreidels. Songs of Chanukah, *by Jean Modesitt (Little, Brown and Co.), has the story and all the songs in Hebrew and English. Collect food for your local food bank, or make a treat to share at a nursing home. It's fun to celebrate Hanukkah Israeli style.*

Menorahs

1. Roll clay into a long snake.
2. Make one end higher for the *shamash*, or helper candle.
3. Use a birthday candle to make nine holes in the clay.
4. Let clay dry.
5. Paint your menorah.





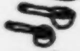
1. Make eight small balls of clay.
2. Make one larger one.
3. Line up the balls and put them together, or leave them separate.
4. Use a birthday candle to make a hole in each ball.
5. Let clay dry.
6. Paint your menorah.

Sufganiot

Recipe from Gail Williamson

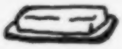
You'll Need:

1/4 oz. dry yeast


2 TBLSP warm water

1/8 cup sugar

1/2 tsp salt


1 oz. butter or margarine

1 egg, beaten

1/4 cup, plus 1 TBSP, warm milk or water

oil for frying

jam or jelly

Superfine sugar

What to Do:

1. Mix the yeast, water, and 1 tsp sugar. Let it stand until bubbly.
2. Sift the flour and salt into a bowl. Rub in the margarine. Make a well in the flour mixture. Add the yeast mixture, beaten egg, and enough warm milk or water to make a soft dough. Beat well and then knead for 5 minutes on a floured board.
3. Divide into 12 pieces (more if desired). Knead each well, and place apart on greased and floured tin. Brush with water and place the tin in a greased plastic bag and leave until the pieces have doubled in size. This will take about 1 hour in a warm place.
4. Fry in oil that is not too hot (350-360 degrees) turning over to brown both sides, about 3 minutes. Drain on absorbent paper.
5. With the handle of a spoon, make a hole in the side of each doughnut, insert the jam, roll in sugar.

A PARTY FOR ME!

by Susan M. Root

Each child is special. While we all say this phrase at one time or another, why not make it really mean something by scheduling a special activity at your center which celebrates each child.

The "I Am Special" celebration, or one entitled "Celebrating Ourselves," is best scheduled for approximately one hour early in the evening or on a weekend. Saturday morning or Sunday afternoon both have worked well. Each child will be accompanied by one special adult: parent, grandparent, relative, or friend. Together, they will explore the stations (described below) that you set up around the room, each station focusing on a different aspect of the child.

STATIONS

A brief statement about the purpose of each station is included with the descriptions below. This helps adults realize how children's play experiences contribute to their learning and development.

All About Me

All About Me Book *It is important for children to see and use reading and writing with adults. Important oral and written language skills develop as we take children's dictation and read it back to them.*

Provide a small booklet: four half sheets of copy paper with a construction paper cover, stapled together, and labeled "All About Me." The child and adult can work together to complete four pages:

(1) Me, (self-portrait)
(2) My hand *(adult can help child trace hand),*
(3) I like ... *(adult can fill in the dictation),*
(4) My favorite thing to do with adult's name is ... *(again, adult can help child complete the dictation).*

Mirrors *Self-image and self-expression are important components of our development. Adult/child*

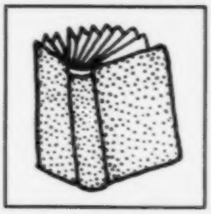
Helpful Hints

Here are some hints for making your celebration a success.

1. Post a large sign in a prominent location which lists each station. Adults can refer to this list to see if they have accomplished each task.
2. At each station, provide a sheet with clear instructions, a brief description of the benefits of the activity, and all the necessary materials.
3. As you greet the participants, encourage each child to take the adult to the station of their choice. This gives the child a feeling of importance and helps to reduce any reluctance on the part of the adult in getting started.
4. During the session, move through the stations talking and encouraging all efforts.
5. Provide a signal for ending the session and encourage everyone to help clean up. At this point, you might invite everyone to eat the snack that has been prepared. This will provide the opportunity for informal conversation among the participants.

interaction makes each child feel valued for herself.

Provide several small hand mirrors and if possible some books containing mirrors such as Marion Walter's *The Magic Mirror Book* (Scholastic) or *Magic Mirror Tricks* (Scholastic). Encourage adults and children to look in the mirror, discussing each other's features. They can also make silly faces at each other and in the mirrors—laughter will explode.

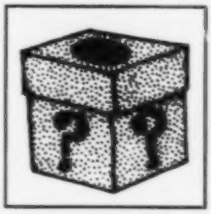


Books *Reading books with young children helps them develop many language skills such as new vocabulary, story sequencing, and work recognition as well as providing a special emotional relationship with the adult who is reading.*

Encourage each child to choose a favorite book from the shelf and have it read by the adult. It's a heartwarming experience to see so many children sharing books at one time and to hear so many different voices.

Blocks *Working with blocks helps children develop perceptual skills involving shape, size, weight, equivalency, and comparisons. They use new words to describe what and how they are building.*

Can you build something as long as yourself? Can you build something as high as your waist? Can you build something that could travel somewhere? Provide a series of questions and the builders will enjoy exploring together.



Senses *We use our senses of sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste to explore our world.*

Provide a box with an opening large enough for one or two hands. Have a pile of objects of different sizes and textures available. Adult/child partners can take turns putting things inside and guessing by feel.

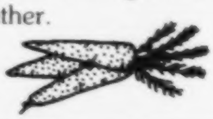
You might also provide a small blindfold. Partners can take turns describing objects to each other and guessing. These experiences highlight the use of different senses in learning about the world.

EANUT
UTTER

Make a Snack *Doing something by yourself helps to develop a positive self-concept and a willingness to try other new things.*

Provide ingredients and step-by-step picture directions for each adult/child pair to make a special snack. The emphasis is on "I made it myself." Try Ants on a Log (peanut butter on celery, dotted with raisins), a "Me" Salad (begin with pear halves and decorate with lettuce or shredded carrot hair, raisin eyes, and a cherry mouth), or Pudding in a Cup (1 Tablespoon plus one teaspoon of instant pudding mixed with 1/3 cup milk and stirred in a paper cup). Enjoy right away or ask participants to label and set aside so everyone can eat together.

You'll know your celebration has been a success when you look around at the adult/child pairs enthusiastically engaged in activities and smiling and laughing together.

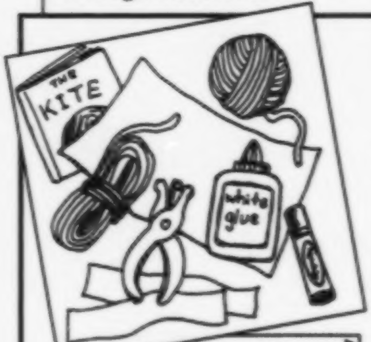


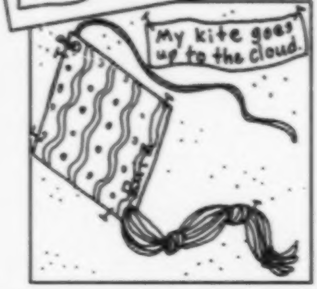
CELEBRATION BOXES

by Barbara F. Backer

Little children are joyous people. What seems ordinary to adults fills young ones with excitement. They see wonder in the world and are delighted with most new experiences.

With a little planning, we can provide "spontaneous" celebrations of these events. Think ahead about times that spark excitement—windy days, finding a tiny wildflower, a loose tooth, rainbows, new shoes, chicken pox, a new baby—and create a Celebration Box for each happening. Gather together the things you'll need. When the time comes, everything is in one place, and you're ready for instant learning through celebration.




My kite goes up to the cloud.

WINDY DAY BOX

ITEMS IN THE BOX: *The Kite* by Marycia Packard (Children's Press) ◆ 12"x 18" construction paper or large wallpaper samples ◆ yarn in several colors ◆ hole punch ◆ glue ◆ tagboard strips ◆ marker

THINGS TO DO:

▲ Read *The Kite*.

▲ Make kites.

1. Cut large diamond shapes from the construction paper or wallpaper samples. Punch a hole at the top corner and the bottom corner.
2. At the bottom corner, thread through several colors of yarn and tie them in a knot as a tail.
3. At the top corner, thread through a 36" length of yarn for the kite string. As the child runs, the kite flies behind him.
4. Let children fly their finished kites in the breeze.

▲ Make a "Windy Day" bulletin board.
Hang children's kites on a bulletin board. Let children dictate words about making or flying their kites. Write these on tagboard strips, and put each child's words by her kite.

CHOCOLATE PUDDING
EGG

LOST TOOTH OR LOOSE TOOTH

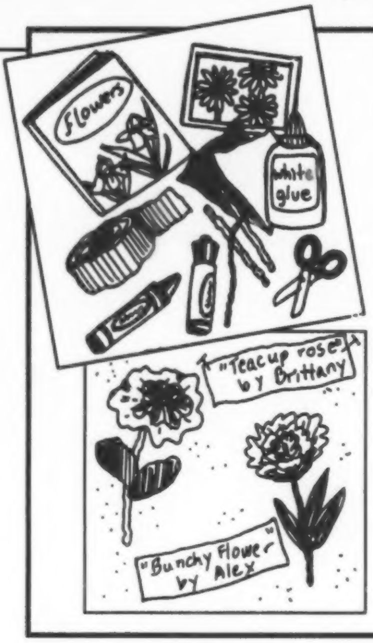
ITEMS IN THE BOX: *Little Rabbit's Loose Tooth* by Lucy Bate (Crown) ◆ packages of instant chocolate pudding ◆ mixing bowl ◆ egg beater ◆ measuring cup ◆ paper cups for serving pudding ◆ plastic spoons ◆ napkins. (Get fresh milk from the school kitchen.)

THINGS TO DO:

▲ Read *Little Rabbit's Loose Tooth* substituting the words chocolate pudding for chocolate ice cream.

▲ Make chocolate pudding.

▲ Let each child draw a picture of himself with a "window" in his mouth.



FIRST FLOWERS

ITEMS IN THE BOX: *Flowers* by David Burnie (Houghton Mifflin), or any other encyclopedia of flowers or field guide to flowers ◆ crepe paper ◆ tissue paper ◆ construction paper ◆ pipe cleaners ◆ scissors ◆ tape ◆ glue ◆ pictures from seed catalogs ◆ books with pictures of flowers ◆ postcards of great floral paintings ◆ crayons or markers ◆ drawing paper ◆ strips of tagboard

THINGS TO DO:

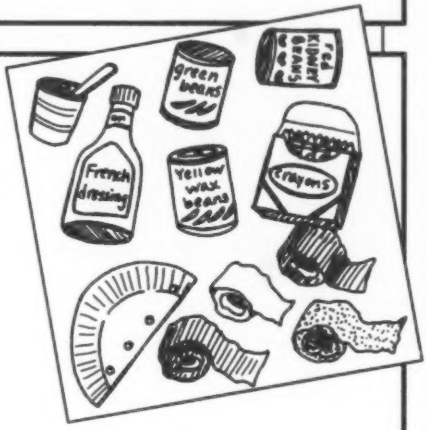
▲ Look at real flowers and pictures of them. Discuss how each flower is unique. No two are the same.

▲ Challenge children to use the crepe paper, tissue paper, construction paper and pipe cleaners to make flowers of their own.

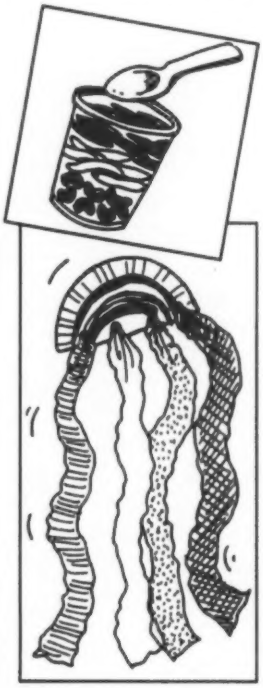
▲ Use the children's flowers to decorate a bulletin board. Have children name their creations, and post the name on a tagboard strip next to the flower.

▲ Encourage children to draw pictures of the flowers they see. Show them how to start at the center of the blossom and work outward in their drawings.

RAINBOW CELEBRATION



ITEMS IN THE BOX: canned green beans ◆ red kidney beans ◆ yellow wax beans ◆ a bottle of orange or red salad dressing (Catalina, French, or Russian) ◆ paper cups ◆ serving spoons ◆ tablespoon paper plates cut in half with four holes punched along the cut edge ◆ 4-foot-long crepe paper streamers in red, blue, yellow, and green ◆ a variety of rainbow-colored crayons ◆ 1 or more prisms ◆ large sheet of white paper ◆ garden hose and nozzle ◆ *A Rainbow of My Own* by Don Freeman (Viking)



THINGS TO DO:

▲ Make Rainbow Salad.

1. Drain the beans.
2. Have each child put a spoonful of each variety in a paper cup or bowl, and add 1 Tblsp. dressing.
3. Stir and eat.

▲ Make Rainbow Streamers.

1. Each child colors a rainbow on half of a paper plate using the plate's shape as a guide.
2. With your help, he pulls one of each color streamer through the four holes. Tie the streamers to hold them in place.
3. Have children take these outside and hold them as they run. They'll enjoy the rainbows that stream out behind them.

▲ Look at a prism rainbow. Experiment with the prism, turning it in sunlight. The prism splits light into its various colors. Position the paper so the resulting rainbow of light falls on the paper, making it easier to see. Discuss the colors. Remind children that the prisms are glass, and allow them to experiment with the prisms. Explain that moisture in the air acts like a prism and produces the color we see in the sky.

▲ Find another rainbow. Let children make a fine spray of water and turn it to find the rainbow.

▲ Read about a rainbow in *A Rainbow of My Own.*

CELEBRATE WITH A COMPUTER

by Evelyn J. Woldman

Celebrations are what make the school year "sparkle" for children of all ages. Whether the celebration centers around a holiday, a birthday, a home event, or any number of other possibilities, everyone loves a party!

It's also a wonderful excuse for teaching children manners, customs, and expectations when it comes to these happy events. Some of the skills might include:

- How to write an invitation
- Vocabulary for party invites
- How to write a guest list (including the values issues on hurt feelings)
- Counting your party guests
- Composing thank-you notes

Even children at a pre-reading stage of development can take part in many of these activities with the help of some of the wonderful technology currently available on the computer.

The following is a listing of just a few of these products, with a short description of their capabilities.

KID PIX 2 (Broderbund)

This piece of software is a combination of two of Broderbund's older products—*Kid Pix* and *Kid Pix Companion*. *Kid Pix 2* allows the user to generate pictures which can be made into invitations or notes of any type. There are a myriad of rubber stamps to choose from, in addition to all of the regular drawing features. One of the best features of this program is the ability to take a series of pictures, and put them together into a slide show which, when produced, will run on any computer, with or without *Kid Pix 2* installed! These shows can make great Mother's or Father's Day presents!

KID PIX STUDIO (Broderbund)

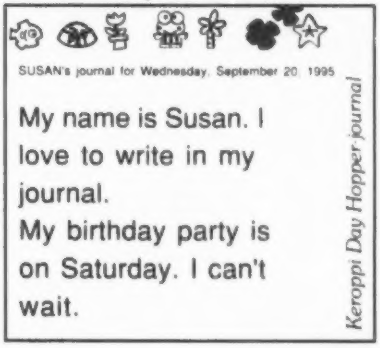
With this new creative multimedia tool, children from preschool on can paint a singing birthday card, animate a picture, put on a digital puppet show, or create collages, stories, or invitations. This products takes *Kid Pix* and, using a variety of multimedia tools, helps even the youngest of children create exciting animated products!

PRINT SHOP DELUXE (Broderbund)

Almost everyone is familiar with one of the best-selling pieces of software ever on the market—*Print Shop*. This new deluxe version takes creating invitations, signs, etc. to the ultimate. Children can make banners, signs, invitations, cards— for any occasion. There are many extra graphics packages that can be purchased, including one specifically for celebrations. The only "down side" to this product is that it is not nearly as easy to operate as the original *Print Shop*. Younger children will definitely need an "adult helper" to create with it. However, the results are usually worth the effort!

KEROPPI DAY HOPPER (Big Top)

Looking for a great way for your little ones to keep track of all of these wonderful celebrations? This program is perfect! It is a calendar, time-keeping program geared especially for the very young learner. Here, with the help of an entertaining frog, children can organize their activities, create calendars, and get wonderful beginning skills in personal planning, scheduling, and organization. Picture icons are lively and inviting, and a real favorite is the addition of an address book, a great vehicle for teaching children the skills of address and phone information.



SUSAN's journal for Wednesday, September 20, 1995

My name is Susan. I love to write in my journal.
My birthday party is on Saturday. I can't wait.

Keroppi Day Hopper journal

SHARING FAMILY MEMORIES

by Leanne D. Grace

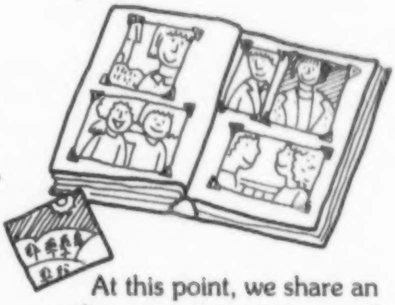
Stories are the glue that binds families together. Remember when... Tell me about when I was little... Do you remember the time... These memories are "stories" triggered by thoughts of happenings, places, and people. A "Family Storytelling Workshop" provides an opportunity for parents and children to share memories and stories together. Throughout the workshop, examples of ways of preserving family stories and memories are shared; for example: journals, photo albums, birthday books, video and audio tape interviews. All of the examples come from families.

To begin the workshop we tell the story *Wilford Gordon McDonald Partridge* by Mem Fox (Kane/Miller). Wilford Gordon helps a friend discover memories that make us cry, laugh, feel warm, remember something from long ago, and are precious as gold.

We then ask parents to share why telling stories is important. Responses include passing on traditions, teaching family values, learning language, and stimulating imagination. Many parents feel as if their family stories are nothing special, but we point out the uniqueness of each family unit.

Story "starters" are introduced. We begin with HAPPENINGS. Everyday happenings and traditions like mealtimes and bedtimes are story stuff. Special happenings like holidays and birthdays become stories. Here we ask children to turn to their parents and share birthday memories. We bring everyone back to the group by singing "Happy Birthday." Weather events can be major happenings and parents are asked to share a weather story with their children. We ask, *"What happens if we don't pass stories on or preserve them in some way?"*

On to PLACES...We help familes take a creative visualization journey to a special childhood place utilizing all the senses. Participants are asked to share with each other. Special places like vacation memories are shared through journals and photo albums with dated captions.



At this point, we share an audience participation story, *It Could Be Worse* by Margot Zemach (Scholastic). This traditional Yiddish story involves a family, their home, and noise.

The last memory key is PEOPLE. We unlock these memories with smells—each of us recalls a special person who smells like perfume, soap, tobacco, or candy. Children turn to their parents ... What smells remind you of Mommy, Daddy, or another caretaker?

The workshop should last no longer than 45 to 50 minutes; you need to keep it moving if children and parents are attending together. If only children are in attendance, you can tell or read aloud more stories. For birthday happenings, read Robert Munsch's *Moria's Birthday* (Annick Press). *Love You Forever* by the same author (Firefly) is a good wrap up story.

As a finale, we play Tom Hunter's song "Memories" from a tape by the same title (Turn the Page Press, Inc.). Families are the creation of their memories or stories, and as Tom Hunter so aptly sings, *"May the memories wrap their arms around you, may your childhood take you by the hand, may what you remember find healing when it hurts, so the memories will protect you when they can."*

IN THE BOOK CORNER

EXPLORE CELEBRATIONS WITH BOOKS

by Sandra L. Malcolm

The harvest season and the end of the year give us much cause for celebration. People choose to celebrate this time of year in many different ways. Each custom is unique and interesting. The books chosen for your classroom enjoyment are but a few of the many available to help children understand the how and why of our many celebrations.

ONE TOUGH TURKEY

by Steven Kroll (Holiday House) is about a very clever turkey named Solomon who outwits the Pilgrims as they hunt for turkey for the first Thanksgiving.

BEFORE READING, ask children: *"How many of you have a special Thanksgiving dinner?" "What do you have to eat?"* List the responses on chart paper. Teach a turkey fingerplay.

AFTER READING, ask questions such as: *"What ways did Solomon use to trick the Pilgrims?" "Do you think this is a true story or a make-believe story?" "Why?" "How did the Pilgrims keep finding the turkeys?" "Why did they want the turkeys?"* Ask children, *"What did they eat instead of turkey?" "Why?" "Would you like to have something different for Thanksgiving dinner?" "What?"*

ACTIVITIES

◆ Show on a map or globe where England is in relationship to where the Plymouth colony was. Discuss how the Pilgrims got to Plymouth and why they came. Show pictures of the Mayflower and discuss the difficulties of traveling that far.

◆ Let children act out the story. Have children think of other ways Solomon could trick the Pilgrims. Act out these ideas also.

◆ Make turkey puppets to encourage language development.

◆ Discuss, examine, smell, and taste squash. Look at it raw as well as cooked.

THE MIRACLE OF THE POTATO LATKES

by Malka Penn (Holiday House), describes how an old woman, through faith, was able to continue her tradition of feeding latkes to the whole village, even during hard times.

BEFORE READING, remind children that people celebrate different holidays using their own unique customs. Discuss Hanukkah as part of your *Celebrations* theme. Say the word "latke." Ask children to say what they think it means. Ask again what they think a *latke* is if it can be a "potato latke." Ask children what they think the story could be about.

AFTER READING, ask questions such as: *"What are potato latkes?" "Why do you think Tante Golda made some for the whole village once a year?" "Why do you think there were so few potatoes this one year? "Where did Tante Golda find potatoes each day?"* Ask children where they think Tante Golda got all her potatoes. Discuss and show a menorah.

ACTIVITIES.

◆ Perform the story as a Hanukkah play.

◆ Invite a Jewish parent or other guest to school to share the customs and celebrations at Hanukkah.

◆ Using the recipe in the back of the book, make potato *latkes* to share.

◆ Have children illustrate and/or write an invitation to their family to come enjoy the play and share the *latkes*.

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AN EARLY AMERICAN CHRISTMAS

by Tomie dePaola (Holiday House) introduces us to a German family who comes to live in a New England village, bringing their Christmas customs with them. The village people call them the 'Christmas family' but soon decide to adopt some of their celebrations.

BEFORE READING, ask children to talk about winter holidays at their homes. Ask them if they bake cookies; decorate a tree; sing songs; etc. Announce, *"We are going to read a story about a small village that didn't do all these things at Christmas until a new family moves in." "Let's read the story to find out what the new family does that is the same as things we do (different than...)."*

AFTER READING, ask *"Did the people of the village like the customs they saw?" "How do you know?" "Why did they call the new family the 'Christmas family'?" "What were some of the things they did at Christmas?" "Do you do some of the same things at your house?" "What?" "What is unusual about the pictures?" "Why do you think they are done this way"?*

ACTIVITIES,

- Show on a map the places mentioned in the story.
- Bring bayberry candles for children to smell. Make candles as a project.
- Make cut-paper tree ornaments and wax them as they did in the story.
- Pop popcorn and make dried apple rings to string as tree decorations.
- Bake cookies and make pretzels to share during the holidays.
- Sing holiday songs. Plan a time to go caroling with children.

HARVEY SLUMFENBUREGER'S CHRISTMAS PRESENT

by John Burningham (Candlewick Press), explains how Santa is forced to use many forms of transportation to deliver a present forgotten on Christmas Eve.

BEFORE READING, have children pretend they are each Santa. Tell them, *"You just got home from delivering all the Christmas presents. You put the reindeer to bed. Suddenly, you discover one present is left in your bag. What would you do?"* Write the responses on chart paper. Have children look at the cover of the book. Ask children, *"Why do you think Santa is riding a horse?" "Where are his pants?" "Does the title help us know what the story will be about?"*

AFTER READING, ask questions such as, *"Whose present was left in the bag?" "What did Santa do about it?" "Why didn't he take the reindeer and sleigh?" "How did Santa travel to Harvey's house?" "Did he get there on time?" "What do you think was in Harvey's package?"*

ACTIVITIES

- Encourage children to think of other ways Santa could deliver the package. Let them draw pictures to show their ideas. Write a sentence about each picture.
- Challenge children to pretend they are delivering a package from one end of the room to the other. Encourage them to use as many different ways to move as possible.
- Have children try to recall in order how Santa got from his house to Harvey's. On a long sheet of mural paper, draw a map showing his travels.
- Glue a sheet of drawing paper in the center of a piece of wrapping paper large enough to wrap up over the drawing. Have children draw, color or paint a picture of Harvey's present. Fold the paper up over it. Play a class guessing game with the presents as the pictures are shared.

STILL IN THE BOOK CORNER

STORIES FOR THANKSGIVING

by Carol Anfin and Terry Norton

Thanksgiving is a time when we think of food and fun with family and special visitors. But Thanksgiving is also a holiday which causes us to think of sharing our good fortune with others. The following books tell children stories about the traditions of Thanksgiving or help them understand about sharing.

- *Sometimes It's Turkey—Sometimes It's Feathers* by Lorna Balian (Abingdon Press) tells the story of little, old Mrs. Gumm who finds a freckled turkey egg as she is hunting for wild mushrooms in the woods. She decides to "*hatch it, feed it, let it grow plump, and have it for Thanksgiving dinner.*" The illustrations are hilarious. Children will especially enjoy the surprise ending.
- *Twas the Night Before Thanksgiving* by Dav Pilkey (Orchard Books) is based on the familar poem "The Night Before Christmas." In Pilkey's version, eight school children take a field trip to Farmer Mack Nugget's turkey farm. The turkeys greet the children "with downy embraces." Realizing the fate in store for the turkeys as someone's dinner, the children devise a clever plan to save their new friends. The story ends with a warm, loving Thanksgiving celebration enjoyed by both people and birds.
- Lydia Maria Child first published her classic Thanksgiving poem, "The Boy's Thanksgiving," in 1844. Today children can still enjoy this poem in *Over the River and Through the Wood*, Brinton Turkle's beautifully illustrated version (Scholastic). The pictures depict snowy landscapes of nineteenth-century New England. Children will thrill to the scenes of a horse-drawn sleigh.
- In *The Doorbell Rang* by Pat Hutchins (Mulberry Books), the generosity of Sam and Victoria is severely tested when they are expected to share Ma's delicious, freshly baked cookies with twelve hungry children who drop by unexpectedly. There are twelve cookies on the plate, enough for each child to have one cookie. Just as they are ready to eat, the doorbell rings! What will the children do? Who is the thirteenth visitor? How can the cookies be shared fairly?
- *Stone Soup* by Ann McGovern (Scholastic) is based on a classic folktale which can help children more fully understand the concepts of sharing and cooperation. In McGovern's version of the story, a tired, hungry traveler chances upon a big fine house. The traveler asks the old woman who opens the door for a meal. The woman claims that she has no food to share with the traveler. The traveler suggests that they share a pot of stone soup. The woman agrees to give the traveler a stone and a pot of water. As the pot begins to boil and bubble, the traveler suggests that the soup would be much better with some onions. The woman gets some onions from her garden, and eventually the traveler talks her into adding other ingredients. The old woman and the traveler share the stone soup, and the old woman is astonished that such a delicious soup could be made from a stone. After reading this book, children can make their own version of stone soup.
- Colors glimmer and shine in Marcus Pfister's beautifully illustrated book *The Rainbow Fish* (North-South Books). But there is more to this book than pretty pictures. Pfister tells the story of the most beautiful fish in the ocean. In spite of his beauty, none of the other fish want to be his friend. When the rainbow fish decides to share his glittering scales with the others, he learns about the joy of giving.

This concept of giving is central to the tradition of celebrating Thanksgiving. Books can help children see it as a time of cooperation, sharing, and happy visits with family and friends.

CELEBRATE DECEMBER WITH BOOKS

by Paula Gaj Sitarz

There are some excellent non-fiction books about the holidays that come in December.

Starting on December 18, many people will celebrate Hanukkah this year. Introduce youngsters to this holiday using *Festival of Lights: The Story of Hanukkah* by Maida Silverman (Little Simon). The text is written in short sentences and understandable language. Author Silverman draws children into the past and gives them a feel of the background and the people who lived there. The role of children is underscored in text and pictures.

Once you have introduced children to the history of Hanukkah, its traditions and symbols, a delightful book to share with children is *What Can It Be?: Riddles About Hanukkah* by Susan Cornell Poskanzer (Silver Press). The book is clever and original. Each right-hand page has a rhyming riddle about a tradition, symbol, food, or game associated with Hanukkah. Turn the page and there is the answer in the text with an explanation of what the item is.

Several of the activities in *Hanukkah, Oh, Hanukkah: A Treasury of Stories, Songs and Games to Share* compiled by Wendy Wax (Bantam Books) are appropriate to share with young children. Youngsters will enjoy learning songs such as "Oh, Hanukkah, Oh, Hanukkah" and "In My Window." They will also enjoy the fingerplay "Five Little Pieces of Hanukkah Gelt."

In *Christmas Time* (Holiday House) Gail Gibbons incorporates her trademark uncluttered bold color illustrations with a clear text, and only one or two concepts per page, to explain the history and traditions of Christmas. She includes basic information on when and why Christmas is celebrated, the story of the birth of Jesus and the coming of the Wise Men.

Emily Kelly has written an interesting, delightful book, *Christmas Around the World* (Carolrhoda Books). Kelly's text is complimented by soft, joyful illustrations of people celebrating Christmas in Mexico, Iran, China, Sweden, Iraq, Spain and Norway. She also includes short paragraphs on Christmas customs in Australia, Denmark, France, and Germany.

Gerald M. Knox includes some Christmas crafts for very young children in *(Better Homes and Gardens) Christmas Trims Kids Can Make* (Meredith Corp.). The crafts have clear instructions and include patterns. Those activities appropriate for preschoolers with some assistance are: "Ribbon Cards," "Clay-Pot Bells," "Felt Tree Ornaments," and "Christmas Stockings."

Kwanzaa is an African-American holiday that is celebrated for seven days from December 26 through January 1. *The Gifts of Kwanzaa* by Synthia Saint James (Albert Whitman and Co.) is an exquisite book with bold, bright patterned paintings in solid blocks of color. On the first page, Saint James explains, for teachers, the origin of Kwanzaa, the meaning of the word, and the seven principles of the celebration. The rest of the book is written from the point of view of a child who is enjoying Kwanzaa. In this context, Saint James introduces the symbols of Kwanzaa and their significance, what is done each day of Kwanzaa, the principles and the traditions of Kwanzaa.

Kathy Ross has written an excellent, comprehensive book *Crafts for Kwanzaa* (The Millbrook Press) perfect to share with young children. Most of the twenty craft projects can easily be done by preschoolers. One page is devoted to an explanation of Kwanzaa and a list of The Seven Principles of Kwanzaa. Large color sketches and diagrams are provided for each craft. Older children can follow the directions themselves.

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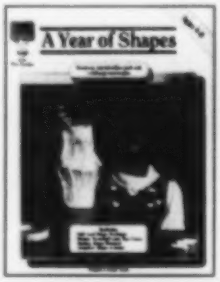

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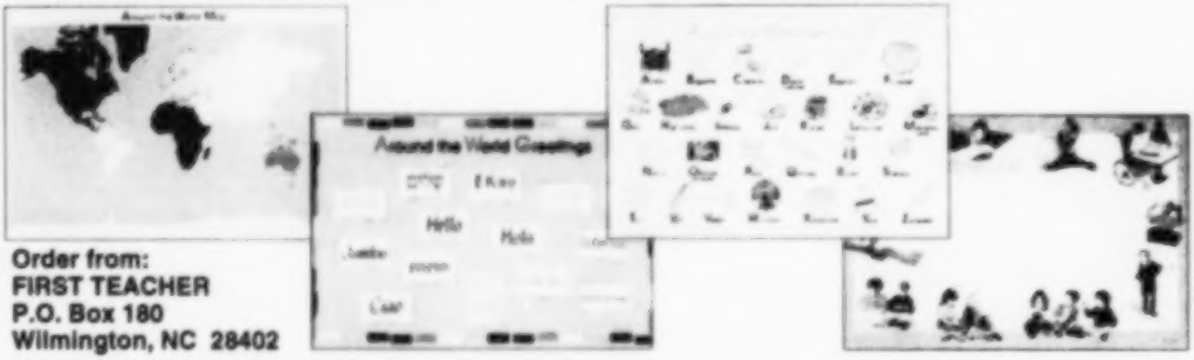

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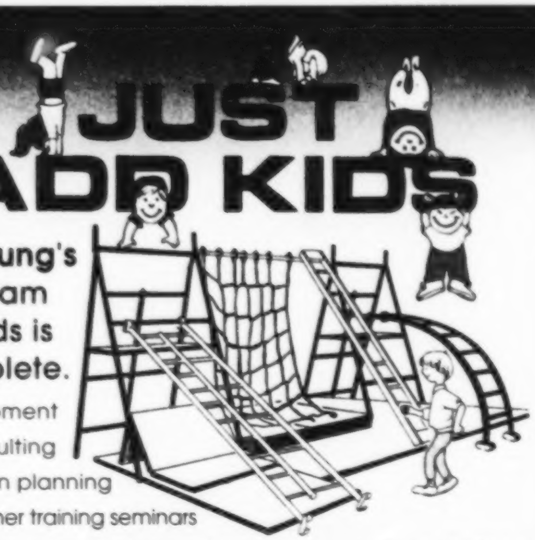

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